THE

EARTHLY PARADISE.

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A POEM.

BY

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POPULAR EDITION.

IN TEN PARTS.

PART IX.

THE RING GIVEN TO VENUS.
BELLEROPHON IN LYCIA.

LONDON:
ELLIS AND GREEN,
29 NEW BOND STREET, W.
(*Late* 33 *King Street, Covent Garden*).
MDCCCLXXII.



THE night had fallen or ere the tale was done,
And on the hall-floor now the pale moon shone
In fitful gleams, for the snow fell no more,
But ragged clouds still streamed the pale sky o'er:
A while they sat, and seemed to hear the sea
Beat 'gainst the ice-glazed cliffs unceasingly,
Though nought belike that noise was but the wind
Caught in some corner, half blocked-up and blind
With the white drift:—just so the mournfulness
Of the tale told out did their hearts oppress
With seeming sorrow, for a glorious life
Twisted awry and crushed dead in the strife
Long ages past; while yet more like it was
That with the old tale o'er their souls did pass
Shades of their own dead hopes, and buried pain
By measured words drawn from its grave again,
Though no more deemed a strange unheard-of thing
Made but for them; as when their hearts did cling
To those dead hopes of things impossible,
While their tale's ending yet was left to tell.

STILL the hard frost griped all things bitterly,
And who of folk might now say when or why
The earth should change and spring come back again.
—Spring clean forgotten, as amidst his pain
Some hapless lover's chance unmeaning kiss
Given unto lips that never shall be his
In time long passed, ere bitter knowledge came,
And cherished love was grown a wrong and shame.
—Yet mid the dead swoon of the earth, the days
'Gan lengthen now, and on the hard-beat ways
No more the snow drave down; and, spite of all,
The goodman's thoughts must needs begin to fall
Upon the seed hid in the dying year,
And he must busy him about his gear;
And in the city, at the high noon, when
The faint sun glimmered, sat the ancient men,
With young folk gathered round about once more,
Who heeded not the east wind's smothered roar.
Since unto most of them for mere delight
Were most things made, the dull days and the bright;
And change was life to them, and death a tale
Little believed, that chiefly did avail
To quicken love and make a story sweet.

Now the old Swabian's glittering eyes did meet
A maiden's glance, who reddened at his gaze,

Whereon a pleasant smile came o'er his face,
As from his pouch a yellow book he drew
And spake:
"Of many things the wise man knew,
The man who wrote this; many words he made
Of haps that still perchance for great are weighed
There in the East: how kings were born and died,
And how men lied to them, and how they lied,
And how they joyed in doing good and ill:
Now mid the great things that his book do fill,
Here is a tale, told, saith he, by a crone
At some grand feast forgotten long agone,
Which may perchance scarce be of much less worth
Than tales of deeds that reddened the green earth—
Fools' deeds of men, who well may be to you
As good as nameless, since ye never knew
The ways of those midst whom they lived erewhile,
And what their hearts deemed good, or nought, and vile."

THE RING GIVEN TO VENUS.

ARGUMENT.

THERE was a man in a certain great city who on his wedding-day unwittingly gave his spousal-ring to the Goddess Venus, and for this cause trouble came upon him, till in the end he got his ring back again.

THE story of this chronicle
Doth of an ancient city tell,
Well built upon a goodly shore;
The wide lands stretched behind it bore
Great wealth of oil and wine and wheat;
The great sea carried to its feet
The dainty things of many lands;
There the hid miners' toiling hands
Dragged up to light the dull blue lead,
And silver white, and copper red,
And dreadful iron; many a time
The sieves swung to the women's rhyme
O'er gravelly streams that carried down
The golden sand from caves unknown;
Dark basalt o'er the sea's beat stood,
And porphyry cliffs as red as blood;
From the white marble quarries' edge
Down to the sweeping river's sedge,

Sheep bore the web that was to be;
The purple lay beneath the sea,
The madder waved in the light wind,
The woad-stalks did the peasant bind
That were to better his worn hood;
And ever, amid all things good,
Least of all things this lucky land
Lacked for the craftsman's cunning hand.

So richer grew that city still
Through many a year of good and ill,
And when the white beasts drew the car
That bore their banner to the war,
From out the brazen gates enwrought
With many a dreamer's steadfast thought,
An hundred thousand men poured out
To shake the scared earth with their shout.

Now little will your wonder be
That mid so great prosperity
Enough there was of ill and sin;
That many folk who dwelt therein
Lived evil lives from day to day,
Nor put their worst desires away.
But as in otherwise indeed
Of God's good pardon had they need,
And were herein as other folk,
So must they bear this added yoke,
That rife was wicked sorcery there;

And why I know not; if it were
Wrought by a lingering memory
Of how that land was wont to be
A dwelling-place, a great stronghold
Unto the cozening gods of old.
It might be so; but add thereto
That of all men life's sweets they knew,
That death to them was wholly bad,
So that perchance a hope they had
That yet another power there was
Than His who brought that death to pass.

Howe'er that may be, this I know,
That in that land men's lives were so
That they in trouble still must turn
Unholy things and strange to learn:
Had this man mid the infidel
A lost son, folk might buy and sell;
Did that one fear to pass his life
With unrewarded love at strife;
Or had he a long-missing keel;
Or was he with the commonweal
In deadly strife; or perchance laid
Abed, by fever long downweighed;
Or were his riches well-nigh done;—
Love, strife, or sickness, all was one,
This seemed the last resource to them,
To catch out at the strange-wrought hem
Of the dark gown that hid away

The highest ill from light of day.
Yea, though the word unspoken was,
And though each day the holy mass
At many an altar gold-arrayed
From out the painted book was said,
And though they doubted nought at all
Of how the day of days must fall
At last upon the earth, and range
All things aright that once seemed strange;
Yet Evil seemed so great a thing
That 'neath its dusk o'ershadowing wing
They needs must cower down; now at least
While half a god and half a beast
Man seemed; some parley must they hold
With God's foe, nor be overbold
Before the threatening of a hand
Whose might they did not understand,
Though oftentimes they felt it sore:
And through this faithlessness, the more
Ill things had power there, as I deem,
Till some men's lives were like a dream,
Where nought in order can be set,
And nought worth thence the soul may get,
Or weigh one thing for what it is;
Yea, at the best mid woe and bliss,
Some dreamlike day would come to most.

Now this great city still made boast
That, mid her merchant's, men there were

Who e'en from kings the bell might bear
For wealth and honour: and I think
That no men richer wines might drink,
Were better housed, or braver clad,
Or more of all the world's joy had
Than their rich men; that no king's door
Could show forth greater crowds of poor,
Who lacked for bread and all things good,
Than in that land a merchant's could—
Yea, rich indeed 'mongst all were they

Now on a certain summer day
One of their fairest palaces,
A paradise midst whispering trees,
Beyond its wont was bright and fair;
Great feast did men get ready there,
Because its young lord, lately come
Back from the eastlands to his home,
That day should wed a lovely maid;
He, for that tide too long delayed,
A lading of great rarities
Had brought to dazzle those sweet eyes;
So had you wandered through the house
From hall to chamber amorous,
While in the minster church hard by,
Mid incense smoke and psalmody,
The gold-clad priest made one of twain,
So wandering had you tried in vain
To light on an uncomely thing;

Such dyes as stain the parrot's wing,
The May-flowers or the evening sky,
Made bright the silken tapestry;
And threaded pearls therein were wrought,
And emeralds from far eastlands brought
To deck the shapes of knight and king;—
His maybe who of old did sing
God's praises 'twixt the shield and spear,
Or his the Trojan folk did fear.
Or from the silken mimicry
Of fair Cassandra might you see
Oileus the red ruby tear,
As he her snowy breast made bare;
Since woe itself must there be sweet
For such a place to be made meet.

If such things hid the marble walls,
What wonder that the swift footfalls
Were dulled upon the marble floor
By silken webs from some far shore,
Whereon were pictured images
Of other beasts and other trees
And other birds than these men knew;
That from the vaulted ceilings' blue
Stars shone like Danaë's coming shower,
Or that some deftly painted bower
Thence mocked the roses of that day?
Full many a life had passed away,
And many a once young hand grown old,

Dealing with silk and gems and gold,
Through weary days and anxious nights,
That went to fashion those delights,
Which added now small bliss indeed
To those who pleasure had to meed
Upon a day when all were glad :
Yet when the Church all dues had had,
And the street, filled with minstrelsy,
Gave token of the twain anigh ;
When through the hall-doors, open wide,
Streamed in the damsels of the bride ;
When the tall brown-cheeked bridegroom came
Flushed with hot love and pride and shame,
And by the hand his love led on,
Who midst that glorious company shone
Like some piece of the pale moonlight
Cut off from quietness and night,—
Then all these dainty things in sooth
Seemed meet for such an hour of youth ;
And vain were words such joy to stay ;
And deathless seemed that little day,
And as a fitful hapless dream
The past and future well might seem.

What need to tell how sea and earth
Had been run through to make more mirth,
For folk already overglad—
What cunning pageants there they had ;
What old tales acted o'er again,

Where grief and death glad folk did feign,
Who deemed their own joy still would bide;
What old songs sung wherein did hide
Meet meanings for that lovesome day;
What singing of the bridal lay
By a fair, soft-voiced trembling maid,
Like to the Goddess well arrayed,
Who, dreaded once, was grown to be
A pageant-maker's imagery?
Why make long words of that sweet band
Who scattered flowers from slender hand,
And brought the garlands forth? How tell
What music on the feasters fell,
So sweet and solemn, that from mirth
O'erstrained well-nigh must tears have birth?—
Nay, let all pass, and deem indeed
That every joyance was their meed
Wherewith men cheat themselves to think
That they of endless joy may drink;
That every sense in turn must bear
Of o'er-sweet pleasure its full share,
Till for awhile the very best
They next might gain seemed utter rest,
And of some freshness were they fain.
So then the garden did they gain,
And wandered there by twos and threes
Amidst the flowers, or 'neath the trees,
Sat, keeping troublous thoughts at bay.

So fared they through the earlier day;
But when the sun did now decline,
And men grew graver for the wine
That erst such noble tales had told;
And maids no more were free and bold,
But reddened at the words half-said,
While round about the rebecks played;
Then needs must the feastmasters strive
Too pensive thoughts away to drive,
And make the sun go down with mirth
At least upon that spot of earth;
So did the minstrel men come in,
And tale-tellers the lay begin,
And men by fabled woes were stirred,
Or smiling their own follies heard
Told of some other; and withal
Here did the dice on table fall,
Here stout in arms the chess-king stood;
There young men stirred their sluggish blood
With clattering sword and buckler play,
There others on the daisies lay
Above the moat, and watched their quill
Make circles in the water still,
Or laughed to see the damsel hold
Her dainty skirt enwrought with gold
Back from the flapping tench's tail,
Or to his close-set dusky mail
With gentle force brought laughingly
The shrinking finger-tip anigh.

Midst these abode a little knot
Of youths and maidens, on a spot
Fenced by a cloister of delight,
Well wrought of marble green and white;
Wherein upon a wall of gold
Of Tristram was the story told,
Well done by cunning hands that knew
What form to man and beast was due;
Midmost, upon a space of green,
Half shaded from the summer sheen,
Half with the afternoon sun thrown
Upon its daisies glittering strewn,
Was gathered that fair company
Wherewith the bridegroom chanced to be,
Who through the cloister door must gaze
From time to time 'thwart the sun's blaze
On to a shaded space of grass
Whereon his new-wed maiden was,
Hearkening in seeming to a song
That told of some past love and wrong;
But as he strained his ear to catch
Across the wind some louder snatch
Of the sweet tune, new-coming folk
The sweet sight hid, the music broke;
Of these one maiden trimly girt
Bore in her gleaming upheld skirt
Fair silken balls sewed round with gold;
Which when the others did behold
Men cast their mantles unto earth,

And maids within their raiments' girth
Drew up their gown-skirts, loosening here
Some button on their bosoms clear
Or slender wrists, there making tight
The laces round their ankles light;
For folk were wont within that land
To cast the ball from hand to hand,
Dancing meanwhile full orderly;
So now the bridegroom with a sigh,
Struggling with love's quick-gathering yoke,
Turned round unto that joyous folk,
And gat him ready for the play.

Lovely to look on was the sway
Of the slim maidens 'neath the ball
As they swung back to note its fall
With dainty balanced feet; and fair
The bright outflowing golden hair,
As swiftly, yet in measured wise
One maid ran forth to gain the prize;
Eyes glittered and young cheeks glowed bright,
And gold-shod foot, round limb and light,
Gleamed from beneath the girded gown
That, unrebuked, untouched, was thrown
Hither and thither by the breeze;
Shrill laughter smote the thick-leaved trees,
Familiar names clear voices cried,
Sweet sound rose up as sweet sound died,
And still the circle spread and spread,

As folk to all that goodlihead
Kept thronging in, till they must stay
A little while the eager play,
And now, for very breathlessness,
With rest the trodden daisies bless.
So now against the wall some leaned,
Some from amidst the daisies gleaned
The yellow trefoil, and the blue
Faint speedwell in the shade that grew;
Some panting sat and clasped their knees
With faces turned unto the breeze,
And midst them the new-comers stood,
With hair smooth yet and unstirred blood.

Laurence, the bridegroom, as the game
Unto this tide of resting came,
Turned idle eyes about, and met
An image in the grey wall set,
A thing he knew from early days:
There in a gilded carven place
Queen Venus' semblance stood, more fair
Than women whom that day did bear,
And yet a marvel for the life
Wherewith its brazen limbs were rife.
Not in that country was she wrought,
Or in those days; she had been brought
From a fair city far away,
Ruined e'en then for many a day;
Full many a tale had there been told

Of him who once that Queen did mould,
And all of these were strange to hear,
And dreadful some, and full of fear.
And now as Laurence gazed upon
That beauty, in the old days won
He knew not from what pain and toil,
Vague fear new-risen-up seemed to spoil
The summer joy; her loveliness
That hearts, long dead now, once did bless,
Grown dangerous, 'gan to lead his mind
On through a troublous maze and blind
Of unnamed thoughts, and silently,
With knitted brow, he drew anigh,
And midst the babbling close did gaze
Into the marvel of her face:
Till, with a sudden start, at last
His straying thoughts he seemed to cast
Aside, and laughed aloud, and said:

"O cold and brazen goodlihead,
How lookest thou on those that live?
Thou who, tales say, wert wont to strive
On earth, in heaven, and 'neath the earth,
To wrap all in thy net of mirth,
And drag them down to misery
Past telling—and didst thou know why?—
And what has God done with thee then,
That thou art perished from midst men
E'en as the things thou didst destroy,

Thy Paris and thy town of Troy,
And many a man and maid and town?
How is thy glory fallen adown,
That I, even I, must sigh for thee!"

So spake he, as the minstrelsy
Struck up once more a joyous strain,
And called them to the play again;
And therewithal he looked about,
In answer to the merry shout
That called on him by name to turn.
But even therewith the sun did burn
Upon his new-gained spousal-ring—
A wondrous work, a priceless thing,
Whereon, 'neath mulberries white and red,
And green leaves, lay fair Thisbe dead
By her dead love; the low sun's blaze
It caught now, and he fell to gaze
Thereon, and said at last:
"Perchance
The ball might break it in the dance,
And that an ugly omen were;
Nay, one to ward it well is here.
Thou, Goddess, that heardst Thisbe's vow,
From blind eyes gaze upon her now
Till I return mine own to claim;
And as thou mayst, bear thou the shame
Of being the handmaid to my love;
Full sure I am thou wilt not move."

Know that this image there did stand
With arm put forth and open hand,
As erst on Ida triumphing;
And now did Laurence set the ring
On the fourth finger fair and straight,
And laughing, "Thou mayst bear the weight,"
Turned back again unto the play.

To him slow passed the time away;
But when at last in purple shade
'Twixt wall and wall the grass was laid,
And he grew gladder therewithal,
Then weariness on folk 'gan fall;
The fifes left off their dancing tune,
And sang of lovers fain of June,
And thence that company 'gan go
By twos and threes with footsteps slow,
Pensive at end of mirthful day;
But from them Laurence turned away
Unto the carven dame, to take
The ring he wore for true-love's sake;—
Daylight it was, though broad and red
The sun was grown, and shadows led
Eastward with long lines o'er the grass—
—Daylight, but what had come to pass?

Nearby those voices still he heard
In laugh and talk and careless word;
Upon his cheek the wind blew cold;
His own fair house he did behold

Changed nowise; from the little close
The scent of trodden grass arose—
How could it be a dream?—Yet there
She stood, the moveless image fair,
The little-noticed, oft-seen thing,
With hand fast closed upon his ring.

At first, in agony and haste,
A frantic minute did he waste
In pulling at the brazen hand,
That was as firm as rocks that stand
The day-long beating of the sea;
Then did he reel back dizzily,
And gaze at sky and earth and trees
Once more, as asking words from these
To ravel out his tale for him.
But now as they were waxing dim
Before his eyes, he heard his name
Called out, and therewith fear of shame
Brought back his heart and made him man.
Unto his fellows, pale and wan,
He turned, who, when they saw him so,
What thing might ail him fain would know,
For wild and strange he looked indeed;
Then stammered he, "Nay, nought I need
But wine, in sooth: John, mind'st thou not
How on the steaming shore and hot
Of Serendib a sting I gat
From some unseen worm, as we sat

Feasting one eve? Well, the black folk
E'en saved my life from that ill stroke,
By leech-craft; yet they told me then
I oft should feel that wound again,
Till I had fifty years or more:
This is a memory of that shore;
A thing to be right soon forgot."
And to himself, "If this is not
An empty dream, a cutting file
My ring therefrom shall soon beguile,
When, at the ending of the day,
These wearying guests have gone away."

Now unto supper all folk turned,
And 'neath the torches red gold burned,
And the best pageants of the day
Swept through the hall and said their say,
Departing e'en as men's lives go:
But though to Laurence slow and slow
Those hours must needs seem, none the less
He gave himself to mirthfulness,
At least in seeming; till at last
All guests from out the palace passed.
And now the short soft summer night
Was left at peace for their delight;
But Laurence, muffled up and hid,
Shrinking, betwixt his servants slid,
For now he had a little space
To come unto that mystic place,

Where still his ring he thought to see.
A file and chisel now had he,
And weighty hammer; yet withal
As he drew toward the cloister-wall,
Well-nigh he called himself a fool,
To go with cloak and blacksmith's tool,
And lay hard blows upon a dream;
For now in sooth he nigh must deem
His eyes had mocked him; reaching soon
That cloister by the broad high moon
He hurried through the door, and heard
All round the sound of June's brown bird
Above the voices of the night;
Trembling, he sprang into the light
Through the black arches of the place,
And stealing on stood face to face
With the old smiling image there,
And lowered to her fingers fair
His troubled, wild, and shrinking eyes,
And stretched his hand out to the prize:—
His eyes, his hand, were there in vain.

Once more, as sure of coming gain,
As erst in Ida she did stand,
So stood she now; her open hand,
That late he saw closed round the ring,
Empty and bare of anything:
Gaping awhile he stood, for fear
Now made him think a voice to hear,

And see her change soon, and depart
From out her midst; but gathering heart,
He muttered, "Yet, what have I seen?
Should it not even thus have been,
If the closed hand was but a dream?
Of some guest worser must I deem;
Go, fool; thine own love waiteth thee."
Therewith he went, yet fearfully
Looked o'er his shoulder on the way,
And terror on his heart still lay.

Yet to his chamber at the last
He came, and to the floor he cast
His wrapping mantle, and alone
He strove to think of all things done,
And strove once more to bring again
The longing sweet, the joy and pain
That on that morn he called desire;
For wretched fear had dulled that fire:
And, whereas erewhile he had deemed
That life was joy, and it had seemed
A never-ending game to be,
A fair and rich eternity
Before him, now was it indeed
A troublous fight, where he should need
Help on the left hand and the right,
Nor yet so 'scape the certain night.

But mid these thoughts he heard withal
The chamberlain to pages call,

To bear the bridal wine to him;
And as he might he strove to dim
His anxious thought, and with a smile
The coming curious eyes beguile.
They entered now, and whiles that he
Drank from the gold cup feverishly,
The minstrels, ere his draught was done,
Struck up *The King of England's Son*,
And soon amid that ordered word
The lessening sound of feet he heard,
And then the song itself must die.
But from the bridechamber nearby
Now for a space rose clear and sweet
The damsels' song, *Fair Marguerite;*
And when that ended all was still,
And he with strained, divided will,
Trembling with love, yet pale with fear,
To the bridechamber door drew near,
Muttering some well-remembered charm
That erst had kept his soul from harm.
Yet misty seemed the place; the wall—
Its woven waters seemed to fall,
Its trees, its beasts, its loom-wrought folk,
Now seemed indeed as though they woke,
And moved unto him as he went.
The room seemed full of some strange scent;
And strains of wicked songs he heard,
And half-said God-denying word:
He reeled, and cried aloud, and strove

To gain the door that hid his love;
It seemed to him that, were he there,
All would again be calm and fair.
But in the way before his eyes
A cloudy column seemed to rise,
Cold, odorous, impalpable,
And a voice cried, "*I love thee well,*
And thou hast loved me ere to-night,
And longed for this o'ergreat delight,
And had no words therefor to pray.
Come, have thy will, and cast away
Thy foolish fear, thy foolish love,
Since me at least thou canst not move,
Now thou with ring hast wedded me:
Come, cast the hope away from thee
Wherewith unhappy brooding men
Must mock their threescore years and ten;
Come, thou that mockest me, I live!
How with my beauty canst thou strive?
Unhappy if thou couldst! for see
What depth of joy there is in me!"

Then round about him closed the mist;
It was as though his lips were kissed,
His body by soft arms embraced,
His fingers lovingly enlaced
By other fingers; until he
Midst darkness his own ring did see.

Nought else awhile; then back there came

New vision: as amidst white flame,
The flower-girt goddess wavered there.
Nor knew he now where they twain were,
Midst wild desire that nigh did rend
His changed heart; then there came an end
Of all that light and ecstasy;
His soul grew blind, his eyes could see;
And, moaning from an empty heart,
He saw the hangings blown apart
By the night wind, the lights flare red
In the white light the high moon shed
O'er all the place he knew so well,
And senseless on the floor he fell.

AH, what a night to what a morn!
Ah, what a morrow black with scorn,
And hapless end of happy love!
What shame his helpless shame to prove!
For who, indeed, alone could bear
The dreadful shame, the shameful fear,
Of such a bridal? Think withal,
More trusted such a tale would fall
Upon those folks' ears than on most,
Who, as I said erst, saw a host
Of wild things lurking in the night;
To whom was magic much as right
As prayers or holy psalmody.

So nothing else it seemed might be,
When Laurence for three nights had striven
To gain the fair maid to him given,
But that her sire should know the thing
And help him with his counselling.
So, weary, wasted with his shame,
Unto his house the bridegroom came,
And when the twain were left alone
He told him how the thing had gone.
The old man doubted not the sooth
Of what he said, but, touched with ruth,
Yet spent no time in mourning vain.

"Son," said he, "idle were the pain
To seek if thou some deed hast wrought
Which on thine head this grief hath brought—
Some curse for which this doth atone,
Some laugh whereby is honour gone
From the dread powers unnameable;
Rather, who now can help thee well?"

"Small heed, my father," Laurence said,
"Gave I to such things, and small dread
To anything I could not see,
But it were God who fashioned me:
From witch-wives have I bought ere now
Wind-bags indeed, but yet did trow
Nothing therein, but dealt with these
My shipmen's clamour to appease."

"Well," said he, "that perchance is worse
For thee, yea, may have gained this curse.
But come, I know a certain man
Who in these things great marvels can,
And something of an age are we,
Yoke-fellows in astronomy—
A many years agone, alas!"

So therewithal the twain did pass
Toward the great church, and entered there.
And, going 'twixt the pillars fair,
Came to a chapel, where a priest
Made ready now the Holy Feast:
"Hist," said the old man, "there he is;
May he find healing for all this!
Kneel down, and note him not too much,
No easy man he is to touch."

So down upon the floor of stone
They knelt, until the mass was done,
Midst peasant folk, and sailors' wives,
Sore careful for their husbands' lives;
But when the mass was fully o'er
They made good haste unto the door
That led unto the sacristy:
And there a ring right fair to see
The old man to a verger gave
In token, praying much to have
With Dan Palumbus speech awhile:
The verger took it with a smile,

As one who says, 'Ye ask in vain;'
But presently he came again,
And said, "Fair sir, come hither then,
The priest will see you of all men!"

With eyes made grave by their intent
From out the lordly church they went
Into the precinct, and withal
They passed along the minster wall,
And heard amid the buttresses
The grey hawks chatter to the breeze,
The sanctus bell run down the wind;
Until the priest's house did they find,
Built 'neath the belfry huge and high,
Fluttered about perpetually
By chattering daws, and shaken well
From roof to pavement, when the bell
Flung out its sound o'er night or day.

"Sirs, Dan Palumbus takes his way
E'en now from out the sacristy,"
The verger said, "sirs, well be ye!
For time it is that I were gone."
Therewith he left the twain alone
Beside the door, and, sooth to say,
In haste he seemed to get away
As one afeard; but they bode there,
And round about the house did peer,
But found nought dreadful: small it was,
Set on a tiny plot of grass,

And on each side the door a bay
Brushed 'gainst the oak porch rent and grey;
A yard-wide garden ran along
The wall, by ancient box fenced strong;
And in the corner, where it met
The belfry, was a great yew set,
Where sat the blackbird-hen in spring,
Hearkening her bright-billed husband sing.
A peaceful place it should have been
For one who of the world had seen
O'er much, and quiet watch would keep
Over his soul awaiting sleep.

But now they heard the priest draw nigh,
And saw him and his shadow high
Wind round the wind-worn buttresses;
So coming by the last of these
He met them face to face: right tall
He was; his straight black hair did fall
About his shoulders; strong he seemed,
His eyes look far off, as he dreamed
Of other things than what they saw;
Strange lines his thin pale face did draw
Into a set wild look of pain
And terror. As he met the twain
He greeted well his ancient friend,
And prayed them within doors to wend.
Small was his chamber; books were there
Right many, and in seeming fair.

But who knows what therein might be
'Twixt board and board of oaken tree?

Palumbus bade them sit, and sat,
And talked apace of this and that,
Nor heeded that the youth spake wild,
Nor that his old friend coughed and smiled,
As ill at ease, while the priest spake,
Then from his cloak a purse did take,
And at the last pushed in his word
Edgewise, as 'twere. Palumbus heard
As one who fain had been born deaf,
Then rose and cried, "Thou fill'st the sheaf,
Thou fill'st the sheaf! this is my doom,
Well may the sexton make my tomb!"
And up and down he walked, muttering,
'Twixt closed teeth, many a nameless thing.

At last he stopped and said, "O ye,
I knew that ye would come to me,
And offer me great store of gold:
Full often good help have I sold,
And thus this tide should I have done;
But on this mountain of grey stone
I stood last night, and in my art
I dealt; and terror filled my heart,
And hope, and great uncertainty;
Therefore I deem that I shall die;
For cool and bold erst have I been,

Whatever I have heard and seen;
But the old Master of my fear
Seems afar now, and God grown near;
And soon I look to see his face.
Therefore, if but for a short space,
Would I be on his side, and do
A good deed; all the more for you;
Since thou art part of sweet days, friend,
That once we deemed would never end;
And in thine eyes meseems, O youth,
Kindness I see and hope and truth;
And thou and he may speak a word
For me unto my master's Lord:—
Well, I must reap that I did sow—
But take your gold again and go:
And thou for six days fast and pray,
And come here on the seventh day
About nightfall; then shalt thou learn
In what way doth the matter turn,
And fully know of time and place,
And be well armed thy foe to face."

So homeward doubtful went the twain,
And Laurence spent in fear and pain
The six long days; and so at last,
When the seventh sun was well-nigh past,
Came to that dark man's fair abode;
The grey tower with the sunset glowed,
The daws wheeled black against the sky

About the belfry windows high,
Or here and there one sank adown
The dizzy shaft of panelled stone;
And sound of children nigh the close
Was mingled with the cries of those;
And e'en as Laurence laid his hand
Upon the latch, and there did stand
Lingering a space, most startling clear
The sweet chime filled the evening air.
He entered mid the great bell's drone,
And found Palumbus all alone
Mid books laid open:
"Rest," said he;
"Time presses not for thee or me:
Surely shall I die soon enow."
Silent, with hands laid to his brow,
He sat then, nor did Laurence speak,
Fearing perchance some spell to break.
At last the priest caught up a book,
And from its leaves a letter took,
And unknown words there were on it
For superscription duly writ,
And sealed it was in solemn wise.
He said:
"Thou knowest where there lies
Five leagues hence, or a little less,
North of the town, a sandy ness
That shipmen call St. Clement's Head;
South of it dreary land and dead

Lies stretched now, and the sea bears o'er
Ruin of shingle evermore,
And saps the headland year by year,
And long have husbandmen had fear
Of its short-lived and treacherous soil,
And left it free from any toil.
There, with thy face turned toward the land,
At the hill's foot take thou thy stand,
Just where the turf the shingle meets,
Wherewith the sea the marshland eats;
But seaward if thy face thou turn,
What I have learned then shalt thou learn
With like reward—watch carefully
And well, and a strange company
Shall pass thee as thou standest there,
And heed thee not—some foul some fair,
Some glad some sorry; rule thy heart,
And heed them nothing for thy part,
Till at the end of all thou seest
A great lord on a marvellous beast
Unnameable; on him cry out,
And he thereon shall turn about
And ask thy need; have thou no fear,
But give him what I give thee here,
And let him read, and thou shalt win
Thine happiness, and have no sin.
But as for me, be witness thou
That in the scroll I give thee now,
My death lies, and I know it well,

And cry to God against his hell."

In languid voice he spake as one,
Who knows the task that must be done,
And how each word from him should fall,
And gives no heed to it at all;
But here he stopped a little space,
And once more covered up his face;
But soon began his speech again
In a soft voice, and freed from pain:

"And for the folk that thou shalt see,
Whence cometh all that company,—
Marvel thou not thereat, for know
That this is sure; long years ago,
Leagues seaward of that barren place,
The temple of a glorious race,
Built with far mightier walls than these,
Stood fair midst groves of whispering trees.
Thence come these folk remembering
Their glory once so great a thing—
I have said: 'Could they be once more
As they have been,—but all is o'er,
What matters what is, what has been,
And what shall be, when I have seen
The last few hours of my last day?—
Depart.— Ah me, to cast away
Such power as I on earth have had!
I who could make the lover glad
Above his love's dead face,—at least

A little while—now has all ceased
With that small scrap of black and white:
Think of me, God, midst thy delight,
And save me! yea, or do thy will!
For thou too hast beheld my skill."

The scroll did Laurence hold in hand,
And silent he a space did stand,
Gazing upon Palumbus, who
Sat open-eyed, as though he knew
Nought of what things were round·about;
So, stealthily, and in great doubt
Of strange things yet to come to pass,
Did Laurence gain the darkening grass,
And through the precinct and the town
He passed, and reached the foreshores brown,
And gathered heart, and as he might
Went boldly forward through the night.
At first on his left hand uprose
Great cliffs and sheer, and, rent from those,
Boulders strewn thick across the strand,
Made weary work for foot and hand;
But well he knew the path indeed,
And scarce of such light had he need
As still the summer eve might shed
From the high stars or sunset dead.
Soft was the lovely time and fair,
A little sea-wind raised his hair,
That seemed as though from heaven it blew.

All sordid thoughts the sweet time slew,
And gave good hope such welcoming.
That presently he 'gan to sing,
Though still amid the quiet night
He could not hear his song aright
For the grave thunder of the sea
That smote the beach so musically,
And in the dim light seemed so soft
As each great wave was raised aloft
To fall in foam, you might have deemed
That waste of ocean was but dreamed,
And that the surf's strong music was
By some unknown thing brought to pass;
And Laurence, singing as he went,
As in some lower firmament,
Beneath the line that marked where met
The world's roof and the highway wet,
Could see a ship's light gleam afar
Scarce otherwise than as a star,
While o'erhead fields of thin white cloud
The more part of the stars did shroud.

So on he went, and here and there
A few rough fisher-carles there were,
Launching their ordered keels to sea
Eager to gain, if it might be,
The harbour-mouth with morning-light,
Or else some bird that flies by night
Wheeled round about with his harsh cry;

Or as the cliffs sank he could spy
Afar some homestead glittering
With high feast or some other thing.
Such gleams of fellowship had he
At first along the unquiet sea,
But when a long way off the town
The cliffs were wholly sunken down,
And on the marshland's edge he went,
For all sounds then the night-jar sent
Its melancholy laugh across
The sea-wind moaning for the loss
Of long-drowned lands, that in old time
Were known for great in many a clime.

But the moon rose, and 'neath its light,
Cloud-barred, the wide wastes came in sight,
With gleaming, sand-choked, reed-clad pools,
And marsh lights for the mock of fools;
And o'er the waste beneath the moon
The sea-wind piped a dreary tune,
And louder grew, and the world then
No more seemed made for sons of men,
And summer seemed an empty name,
And harvest-time a mock and shame:
Such hopeless ruin seemed settled there,
On acres sunny once and fair.

But Laurence now could well behold,
The sandy headland bare and bold

Against the sea, and stayed his feet
Awhile, to think how he should meet
These nameless things, his enemies,
The lords of terror and disease;
Then trembling, hastened on, for thought
Full many an image to him brought,
Once seen, with loathing cast aside,
But ready e'en for such a tide,
Come back with longing's added sting,
And whatso horrors time could bring.
Now thrusting all these thoughts apart
He hastened on with hardy heart,
Till on the doubtful place he stood
Where the sea sucked the pasture's blood,
And with back turned unto the sea
He strove to think right strenuously
Of this and that well-liking place;
The merry clamour of the chase,
Pageant of soldier or of priest,
Or market-place or crowded feast,
Or splintered spears for ladies' sake,
Until he 'gan to dream awake:
Then, midst of all his striving, still
His happiest thoughts must turn to ill,
As in a fevered, restless dream.
He thought about some flowery stream,
Himself in gilded boat thereon—
A livid cloud came o'er the sun,
A great wave swept from bank to bank;

Or flower-crowned amid friends he drank,
And as he raised the red wine up
Fell poison shrieked from out the cup;
The garland when his heart was full
He set upon a fleshless skull;
The lute turned to a funeral bell,
The golden door led down to hell.
Then back from dreams his soul he brought,
And of his own ill matters thought,
And found his fear the lesser grew
When all his heart therein he threw.

Yet awful was the time indeed,
And of good heart sore had he need:
The wind's moan louder than before,
Some wave cast higher up the shore,
The night-bird's brushing past his head,—
All little things grew full of dread;
Yet did he waver nought at all,
Or turn, for whatso thing might fall.

The moon was growing higher now,
The east wind had been strong to blow
The night sky clear from vexing cloud,
And in the west his flock did crowd;
Sharper things grew beneath the light,
As with a false dawn; thin and bright
The horned poppies' blossoms shone
Upon a shingle-bank, thrust on

By the high tide to choke the grass;
And nigh it the sea-holly was,
Whose cold grey leaves and stiff stark shade
On earth a double moonlight made:
Above him, specked with thorn and whin,
And clad with short grey grass and thin,
The hill ran up, and Laurence knew
That down the other slope there grew
A dark pine-wood, whose added sound
Scarce noted, yet did more confound,
With changing note, his wearied mind.

But now with drowsiness grown blind,
Once more he tottered on his place,
And let fall down his weary face;
But then remembering all his part,
Once and again woke with a start,
And dozed again; and then at last,
Shuddering, all slumber from him cast,
Yet scarce knew if he lived or no:
For by his scared wild eyes did go
A wondrous pageant, noiselessly,
Although so close it passed him by;
The fluttering raiment by him brushed,
As through its folds the sea-wind rushed.

By then his eyes were opened wide.
Already up the grey hill-side
The backs of two were turned to him:

One like a young man tall and slim,
Whose heels with rosy wings were dight;
One like a woman clad in white,
With glittering wings of many a hue,
Still changing, and whose shape none knew.
In aftertime would Laurence say,
That though the moonshine, cold and grey,
Flooded the lonely earth that night,
These creatures in the moon's despite
Were coloured clear, as though the sun
Shone through the earth to light each one,
And terrible was that to see.

But while he stood, and shudderingly
Still gazed on those departing twain,
Yet 'gan to gather heart again,
A noise like echoes of a shout
Seemed in the cold air all about,
And therewithal came faint and thin
What seemed a far-off battle's din,
And on a sight most terrible
His eyes in that same minute fell,—
The images of slaughtered men,
With set eyes and wide wounds, as when
Upon the field they first lay slain;
And those who there had been their bane
With open mouths as if to shout,
And frightful eyes of rage and doubt,
And hate that never more should die.

Then went the shivering fleers by,
With death's fear ever in their eyes;
And then the heaped-up fatal prize,
The blood-stained coin, the unset gem,
The gold robe torn from hem to hem,
The headless, shattered golden God,
The dead priest's crushed divining-rod;
The captives, weak from blow and wound,
Toiling along; the maiden, bound
And helpless, in her raiment torn;
The ancient man's last day forlorn:
Onward they pressed, and though no sound
Their footfalls made upon the ground,
Most real indeed they seemed to be.
The spilt blood savoured horribly,
Heart-breaking the dumb writhings were,
Unuttered curses filled the air;
Yea, as the wretched band went past,
A dreadful look one woman cast
On Laurence, and upon his breast
A wounded blood-stained hand she pressed.

But on the heels of these there came
A King, that through the night did flame,
For something more than steel or brass
The matter of his armour was;
Its fashion strange past words to say;
Who knows where first it saw the day?
On a red horse he rode; his face

Gave no more hope of any grace
Than through the blackness of the night
The swift-descending lightning might;
And yet therein great joy indeed
The brightness of his eyes did feed;—
A joy as of the leaping fire
Over the house-roof rising higher
To greet the noon-sun, when the glaive
Forbids all folk to help or save.

Yet harmless this one passed him by,
And through the air deliciously
Faint pensive music breathed, and then
There came a throng of maids and men—
A young and fair and gentle band;
Whereof some passed him hand in hand,
Some side by side not touching walked,
As though of happy things they talked;
Noiseless they were like all the rest
As past him up the hill they pressed;
Yet she who brushed by him most close
Cast to his feet a fresh red rose.

Then somewhat of a space there was
Before the next band 'gan to pass,
So faint they moved for very woe;
And these were men and maids also,
And young were most, and most were fair;
And hand in hand some few went there,
And still were fain with love to see

Each other's bitter misery;
But most, just sundered, went along,
With faces drawn by hidden wrong,
Clenched hands and muttering lips that cursed
From brooding hearts their sin that nursed.
And she that went the last of all,
Black-robed, in passing by let fall
At Laurence's feet a black-bound wreath
Of bitter herbs long come to death.

Alone, afoot, when these were gone,
A bright one came, whose garments shone
In wondrous wise; a bow he bore,
And deadly feathered shafts' good store;
Winged was he and most Godlike fair;
Slowly he went, and oft would stare
With eyes distraught down on the grass,
As waiting what might come to pass;
Then whiles would he look up again,
And set his teeth as if with pain;
And whiles for very joy of heart
His eyes would gleam, his lips would part
With such a smile as though the earth
Were newly made to give him mirth;
Back o'er his shoulder would he gaze
Seaward, or through the marshland haze
That lay before, strain long and hard,
Till fast the tears fell on the sward:—
So towards the hill's brow wandered he.

Then through the moaning of the sea
There came a faint and thrilling strain,
Till Laurence strove with tears in vain,
And his flesh trembled, part with fear,
Part as with some great pleasure near,
And then his dazzled eyes could see
Once more a noiseless company;
And his heart failed him at the sight,
And he forgot both wrong and right,
And nothing thought of his intent;
For close before him now there went
Fair women clad in ancient guise
That hid but little from his eyes
More loveliness than earth doth hold
Now, when her bones are growing old;
But all too swift they went by him,
And fluttering gown and ivory limb
Went twinkling up the bare hill-side,
And lonely there must he abide.

Then seaward had he nigh turned round,
And thus the end of life had found,
When even before his wildered sight
There glided forth a figure white,
And passed him by afoot, alone;
No raiment on her sweet limbs shone,
Only the tresses of her hair
The wind drove round her body fair;
No sandals were there on her feet,

But still before them blossoms sweet
Unnamed, unknown within that land,
Sprang up; she held aloft her hand
As to the trembling man she turned
Her glorious eyes, and on it burned
The dreadful pledge, the looked-for thing,
The well-wrought, lovely spousal ring.

Then Laurence trembled more and more;
Huge longing his faint heart swept o'er,
As one who would a boon beseech.
His fevered hand forth did he reach,
And then she stayed and gazed at him,
Just r oving lightly each fair limb
As one who loiters, but must go;
But even as the twain stood so,
She saying nought, he saying nought,
And who knows what wild wave of thought
Beating betwixt them, from his girth
The dread scroll loosened fell to earth,
And to his ears where sounds waxed dim
Louder its rustle seemed to him
Than loudest thunder; down he bent,
Remembering now his good intent,
And got the scroll within his hand;
And when mid prayers he came to stand
Upright again, then was she gone,
And he once more was left alone.

Foredone, bewildered, downcast now,
Confused clamour heard he grow,
And then swept onward through the night
A babbling crowd in raiment bright,
Wherein none listened aught at all
To what from other lips might fall,
And none might meet his fellow's gaze ;
And still o'er every restless face
Passed restless shades of rage and pain,
And sickening fear and longing vain.
On wound that manifold agony
Unholpen, vile, till earth and sea
Grew silent, till the moonlight died
Before a false light blaring wide,
And from amidst that fearful folk
The Lord of all the pageant broke.

Most like a mighty king was he,
And crowned and sceptered royally ;
As a white flame his visage shone,
Sharp, clear-cut as a face of stone ;
But flickering flame, not flesh, it was ;
And over it such looks did pass
Of wild desire, and pain, and fear,
As in his people's faces were,
But tenfold fiercer : furthermore,
A wondrous steed the Master bore,
Unnameable of kind or make,
Not horse, nor hippogriff, nor drake.

Like and unlike to all of these,
And flickering like the semblances
Of an ill dream, wrought as in scorn
Of sunny noon, fresh eve, and morn,
That feed the fair things of the earth.
And now brake out a mock of mirth
From all that host, and all their eyes
Were turned on Laurence in strange wise,
Who met the maddening fear that burned
Round his unholpen heart, and turned
Unto the dreadful king and cried:
"What errand go ye on? Abide,
Abide! for I have tarried long;
Turn thou to me, and right my wrong!
One of thy servants keeps from me
That which I gave her not; nay, see
What thing thy Master bids thee do!"

Then wearily, as though he knew
How all should be, the Master turned,
And his red eyes on Laurence burned,
As without word the scroll he took;
But as he touched the skin he shook
As though for fear, and presently
In a great voice he 'gan to cry:
"Shall this endure for ever, Lord?
Hast thou no care to keep thy word?
And must such double men abide?
Not mine, not mine, nor on thy side?

For as thou cursest them I curse:—
Make thy souls better, Lord, or worse!"

Then spake he to the trembling man,
"What I am bidden, that I can;
Bide here, and thou shalt see thine own
Unto thy very feet cast down;
Then go and dwell in peace awhile."
Then round he turned with sneering smile,
And once more lonely was the night,
And colourless with grey moonlight.

But soon indeed the dawn drew near,
As Laurence stood 'twixt hope and fear,
Still doubting, now that all was gone,
If his own heart the thing had done,
Though on his coat the blood-mark was,
Though rose and wreath lay on the grass;
So long he waited wearily,
Until, when dawn 'gan stripe the sky,
If he were waking scarce he knew,
When, as he deemed, a white cloud drew
Anigh him from the marshland grey,
Over the empty ghost-trod way,
And from its midst a voice there came:
"*Thou who hast wrought me added shame,*
Take back thine own and go thy ways;
And think, perchance, in coming days,

When all grows old about thee, how
From foolish hands thou needs must throw
A gift of unhoped great delight."
It vanished as the east grew bright,
And in the shadowless still morn
A sense of rest to him was born,
And looking down unto his feet,
His eyes the spousal-ring did meet.
He caught it up with a glad cry,
And kissed it over longingly,
And set it on his hand again;
And dreamlike now, and vague and vain,
Seemed all those images of fear,
The wicked sights that held him there;
And rather now his eyes could see
Her that was his now verily.

Then from that drear unhallowed place
With merry heart he set his face.
A light wind o'er the ocean blew,
And fresh and fair the young day grew;
The sun rose o'er the green sea's rim,
And gave new life and joy to him;
The white birds crying o'er his head
Seemed praising all his hardihead,
And laughing at the worsted foe;
So, joyous, onward did he go,
And in a little sheltered bay
His weariness he washed away,

And made afresh on toward the town:
He met the fish-wife coming down
From her red cottage to the strand,
The fisher-children hand in hand
Over some wonder washed ashore;
The old man muttering words of lore
About the wind that was to be;
And soon the white sails specked the sea,
And fisher-keel on fisher-keel
The furrowed sand again did feel,
And round them many a barefoot maid
The burden on her shoulders laid,
While unto rest the fishers went,
And grumbling songs from rough throats sent.

Now all is done, and he at last,
Weary, but full of joy, has passed
Over his threshold once again,
And scarce believed is all the pain
And all the fear that he has had,
Now night and day shall make him glad.

As for Palumbus, tossed about
His soul might be in dread and doubt,
In rest at least his body lay
Ere the great bell struck noon that day.
And soon a carver did his best
To make an image of that rest,

Nor aught of gold did Laurence spare
To make his tomb both rich and fair;
And o'er his clasped hands and his head
Thereafter many a mass was said.

SO when the tale was clean done, with a smile
The old priest looked around a little while,
That grew, as young and old 'gan say their say
On that strange dream of time long past away;
So listening, with his pleased and thoughtful look
He 'gan turn o'er the worn leaves of his book,
Half noting at the first the flowers therein,
Drawn on the margin of the yellowing skin
Where chapters ended; or fair images
Of kings and lords amidst of war and peace
At books' beginnings; till within a space
His eyes grew fixed upon a certain place,
And he seemed reading. Was it then the name
Of some old town before his eyes that came,
And drew his thoughts there? Did he see it now?
The bridge across the river choked with snow;
The pillared market-place, not thronged this eve;
The muffled goodwives making haste to leave
The gusty minster porch, whose windows shone
With the first-litten candles; while the drone
Of the great organ shook the leaded panes,
And the wind moaned about the turret vanes?
—Nought changed there, and himself so changed mid change,
That the next land—Death's land—would seem nought strange

To his awakening eyes!

Ah! good and ill,
When will your strife the fated measure fill?
When will the tangled veil be drawn away,
To show us all that unimagined day?

FEBRUARY.

NOON—and the north-west sweeps the empty
road,
The rain-washed fields from hedge to hedge are bare;
Beneath the leafless elms some hind's abode
Looks small and void, and no smoke meets the air
From its poor hearth: one lonely rook doth dare
The gale, and beats above the unseen corn,
Then turns, and whirling down the wind is borne.

Shall it not hap that on some dawn of May
Thou shalt awake, and, thinking of days dead,
See nothing clear but this same dreary day,
Of all the days that have passed o'er thine head?
Shalt thou not wonder, looking from thy bed,
Through green leaves on the windless east a-fire,
That this day too thine heart doth still desire?

Shalt thou not wonder that it liveth yet,
The useless hope, the useless craving pain,
That made thy face, that lonely noontide, wet
With more than beating of the chilly rain?
Shalt thou not hope for joy new born again,
Since no grief ever born can ever die
Through changeless change of seasons passing by?

THE change has come at last, and from the west
Drives on the wind, and gives the clouds no rest,
And ruffles up the water thin that lies
Over the surface of the thawing ice;
Sunrise and sunset with no glorious show
Are seen, as late they were across the snow;
The wet-lipped west wind chilleth to the bone
More than the light and flickering east hath done.
Full soberly the earth's fresh hope begins,
Nor stays to think of what each new day wins:
And still it seems to bid us turn away
From this chill thaw to dream of blossomed May:
E'en as some hapless lover's dull shame sinks
Away sometimes in day-dreams, and he thinks
No more of yesterday's disgrace and foil,
No more he thinks of all the sickening toil
Of piling straw on straw to reach the sky;
But rather now a pitying face draws nigh,
Mid tears and prayers for pardon; and a tale
To make love tenderer now is all the bale
Love brought him erst.

But on this chill dank tide
Still are the old men by the fireside,
And all things cheerful round the day just done
Shut out the memory of the cloud-drowned sun,

And dripping bough and blotched and snow-soaked
earth;
And little as the tide seemed made for mirth,
Scarcely they lacked it less than months agone,
When on their wrinkles bright the great sun shone;
Rather, perchance, less pensive now they were,
And meeter for that cause old tales to hear
Of stirring deeds long dead:
So, as it fell,
Preluding nought, an elder 'gan to tell
The story promised in mid-winter days
Of all that latter end of bliss and praise
That erst befell Bellerophon the bright,
Ere all except his name sank into night.

BELLEROPHON IN LYCIA.

ARGUMENT.

Bellerophon bore unawares to Jobates King of Lycia the deadly message of King Prœtus: wherefore the Lycian King threw him often in the way of death, but the Fates willed him not to perish so, but gave him rather great honour and a happy life.

LO ye have erst heard how Bellerophon
Left Argos with his fortune all undone,
Well deeming why, and with a certain scorn,
Rather than anger, in his heart new-born,
To mingle with old courage, and the hope
That yet with life's wild tangle he might cope,
Nor be so wholly beaten in the end:
Whatever pain he gat from failing friend,
And earth made lonely for his feet again,
The brightness of his youth might nowise wane
Before it, or his hardihood grow dim.

So now the evening sun shines fair on him
In Lycia, as he goes up from the quays,
Well-pleased beneath the new folk's curious gaze

With all the fair things that his eyes behold:
As goodly as the tale was that men told
Of King Jobates' city, goodlier
Than all they told it seemeth to him here.
And mid things new and strange and fairly wrought
Small care he hath for any anxious thought.
And so amid the shipmen's company
He came unto the King's hall, builded high
Above the market-place, and no delay
In getting speech of the great King had they,
For ever King Jobates' wont it was
To learn of new-comers things brought to pass
In outlands, and he served in noble wise
Such guests as might seem trusty to his eyes.
So in the midmost of his company
He passed in through the hall, and seemed to be
A very god chance-come among them there,
Though little splendid soothly was his gear;
A bright steel helm upon his brows he had,
And in a dark blue kirtle was he clad,
And a grey cloak thereover; bright enow
With gold and gems his great sword's hilt did glow,
But no such thing was in aught else he wore;
A spear great-shafted his strong right hand bore,
And in his left King Prœtus' casket shone:
Grave was his face now, though there played thereon
A flickering smile, that erst you might have seen
In such wise play, when small space was between
The spears he led and fierce eyes of the foe.

Thus through the Lycian court-folk did they go
Till to the King they came: e'en such a man
As sixty summers made not pinched or wan,
Though beard and hair alike were white as snow.
Down on the sea-farers did he gaze now
With curious peering eyes, and now and then
He smiled and nodded, as he saw such men
Amidst them as he knew in other days;
But when he met Bellerophon's frank gaze,
There his eyes rested, and he said: "O guest.
Though among these thy gear is not the best,
Yet know I no man more if thou art not
E'en that Bellerophon, who late hast got
Such praise mid men of Argos, that thy name
Two months agone to this our country came,
Adorned with many tales of deeds of thine;
And certainly as of a man divine
Thy mien is and thy face: how sayest thou?"

"So am I called," he said, "mid all men now,
Since that unhappy day that drave me forth,
Lacking that half that was of greatest worth,
And made me worthy—for my deeds, O King,
What I have done is but a little thing;
I wrought that I might live from day to day,
That something I might give for hire and pay
Unto my lord; from whom I bring to thee
A message written by him privily,
Hid in this casket; take it from my hand,

And do thou worthily to this my band,
And let us soon depart, for I am fain
The good report of other men to gain,
Wide through the world;—nor do thou keep me here
As one unto King Prœtus' heart right dear,
Because I deem that I have done amiss
Unto him, though I wot not how it is
That I have sinned: certes he bade me flee,
And ere he went my face he would not see;
Therefore I bid thee, King, to have a care
Lest on a troublous voyage thou shouldst fare."

"Sweet is thy voice," the King said; "many a maid
Among our fairest would be well a-paid
In listening to thy words a summer day.
Nor will our honour let thee go away
Whatso thy deed is, though I deem full well
But little ill there is of thee to tell.
Give forth the casket; in good time will we
This message of the King of Argos see,
And do withal what seemeth good therein.
Sit ye, O guests, for supper doth begin!—
Ho! marshals, give them room; but thou sit here,
And gather heart the deeds of Kings to hear
While yet thou mayst, and here with me rejoice,
Forgetting much; for certes in thy voice
Was wrath e'en now, and unmeet anger is
To mingle with our short-lived spell of bliss."

Then sat Bellerophon adown and thought

How fate his wandering footsteps erst had brought
To such another place, and of the end,
Whate'er it was, that fate to him did send.
Yet since the time was fair, and day by day
Ever some rag of fear he cast away,
And ever less doubt of himself he had,
In that bright concourse was he blithe and glad,
And the King blessed the fair and merry tide
That set so blithe a fellow by his side.

BUT the next day, in honour of the guest,
The King bade deck all chambers with his best
And bid all folk to joyous festival,
And let the heralds all the fair youth call
To play within the lists at many a game;
"Since here last eve the great Corinthian came
That ye have heard of: and though ye indeed
Of more than manly strength may well have need
To match him, do your best, lest word he bear
Too soft that now the Lycian folk live here,
Forgetting whence their fathers came of yore
And whom their granddames to their grandsires bore."

So came the young men thronging, and withal

Before the altars did the oxen fall
To many a god, the well-washed fleeces fair
In their own bearers' blood were dyed, and there
The Persian merchants stood and snuffed the scent
Of frankincense, for which of old they went
Through plain and desert waterless, and faced
The lion-haunted woods that edged the waste.
Then in the lists were couched the pointless spears,
The oiled sleek wrestler struggled with his peers,
The panting runner scarce could see the crown
Held by white hands before his visage brown;
The horses, with no hope of gold or gain,
With fluttering hearts remembered not the rein
Nor thought of earth. And still all things fared so,
That all who with the hero had to do
Deemed him too strong for mankind; or if one
Gained seeming victory on Bellerophon,
He knew it for a courteous mockery
Granted to him. So did the day go by,
And others like it, and the talk still was
How even now such things could come to pass
That such a man upon the earth was left.

But when the ninth sun from the earth had reft
Silence, and rest from care, then the King sent
To see Bellerophon, who straightly went,
And found Jobates with a troubled face,
Pacing a chamber of the royal place
From end to end, who turned as he drew near,

And said in a low voice, "What dost thou here?
This is a land with many dangers rife;
Hast thou no heed to save thy joyous life?
The wide sea is before thee, get thee gone,
All lands are good for thee but this alone!"

And as the hero strove to catch his eye
And 'gan to speak, he passed him hurriedly,
And gat him from the chamber: with a smile
Bellerophon turned too within a while,
When he could gather breath from such a speech,
And said, "Far then King Prœtus' arm can reach:
So was it as I doubted; yet withal
Not everything to every king will fall
As he desires it, and the Gods are good;
Nor shall the Lycian herbage drink my blood:—
The Gods are good, though far they drive me forth;
But the four quarters, south, west, east, and north,
All are alike to me, who therein have
None left me now to weep above my grave
Whereso I fall: and fair things shall I see,
Nor may great deeds be lacking unto me:—
Would I were gone then!"

But with that last word
Light footsteps drawing swiftly nigh he heard,
And made a shift therewith his eyes to raise,
Then staggering back, bewildered with amaze,
Caught at the wall and wondered if he dreamed,
For there before his very eyes he seemed



To see the Lycian Sthenobœa draw nigh;
But as he strove with his perplexity
A soft voice reached his ears, and then he knew
That in one mould the Gods had fashioned two,
But given them hearts unlike; yea, and her eyes
Looked on his troubled face in no such wise
As had the other's; wistful these and shy,
And seemed to pray, Use me not cruelly,
I have not harmed thee.—Thus her soft speech ran:

"Far have I sought thee, O Corinthian man,
And now that I have found thee my words fail,
Though erst my heart had taught me well my tale."

She paused, her half-closed lips were e'en as sweet
As the sweet sounds that thence the air did meet,
And such a sense swept o'er Bellerophon
As whiles in spring had come, and lightly gone
Ere he could name it; like a wish it was,
A wish for something that full swift did pass,
To be forgotten.
Some three paces were
Betwixt them when she first had spoken there,
But now, as though it were unwittingly,
He slowly moved a little more anigh;
But she flushed red now ere she spake once more,
And faltered and looked down upon the floor.

"O Prince Bellerophon," at last she said,

"I dreamed last night that I beheld thee dead;
I knew thee thus, for twice had I seen thee,
Unseen myself, in this festivity;
And since I know how loved a man thou art,
Here have I come, to bid thee to depart,
Since that thou mayst do yet."

Nigher he came
And said, "O fair one, I am but a name
To thee, as men are to the Gods above;
And what thing, then, thy heart to this did move?

So spake he, knowing scarce what words he said,
Strange his own voice seemed to him; and the maid
Spake not at first, but grew pale, and there passed
A quivering o'er her lips; but at the last,
With eyes fixed full upon him, thus she spake:

"Why should I lie? this did I for thy sake,
Because thou art the worthiest of all men,
The loveliest to look on. Hear me, then;
But ere my tale is finished, speak thou not,
Because this moment has my heart waxed hot,
And I can speak before I go my way—
Before thou leav'st me.—On my bed I lay,
And dreamed I fared within the Lycian land,
And still about me there on either hand
Were nought but poisonous serpents, yet no dread
I had of them, for soothly in my head

The thought was, that my kith and kin they were;
But as I went methought I saw thee there
Coming on toward me, and thou mad'st as though
No whit about those fell worms thou didst know;
And then in vain I strove to speak to thee,
And bid thee get thee down unto the sea,
Where bode thy men ready at bench and mast;
But in my dream thou cam'st unto me fast,
And unto speech we fell of e'en such things
As please the sons and daughters of great kings;
And I must smile and talk, and talk and smile,
Though I beheld a serpent all the while
Draw nigh to strike thee: then—then thy lips came
Close unto mine; and while with joy and shame
I trembled, in my ears a dreadful cry
Rang, and thou fellest from me suddenly
And layst dead at my feet: and then I spake
Unto myself, 'Would God that I could wake,'
But woke not, though my dream changed utterly,
Except that thou wert laid stark dead anigh.
Then in this palace were we, and the noise
Of many folk I heard, and a great voice
Rang o'er it ever and again, and said,
Bellerophon who would not love is dead.
But I—I moved not from thee, but I saw
Through the fair windows many people draw
Unto the lists, until withal it seemed
As though I never yet had slept or dreamed,
That all the games went on, where yesterday

Thou like a god amidst of men didst play:
But yet through all, the great voice cried and said
Bellerophon who would not love is dead.
This is the dream—ah, hast thou heard me, then?
Abide no more, I say, among these men:
Think'st thou the world without thy life can thrive,
More than my heart without thy heart can live?"

Almost before her lips the words could say,
She turned her eager glittering eyes away,
And hurried past, and as her feet did bear
Her loveliness away, he seemed to hear
A sob come from her; but for him, he felt
As in some fair heaven all his own he dwelt,
As though he ne'er of any woe had known,
So happy and triumphant had he grown.

But when he thus a little while had stood
With this new pleasure stirring all his blood,
He 'gan to think how that she was not there,
And 'thwart the glory of delight came care,
As uttermost desire so wrought in him,
That now in strange new tears his eyes did swim,
He scarce knew if for pleasure or for pain.
Of other things he strove to think in vain—
Nought seemed they;—the strange threatening of the
King,
Nay the maid's dream—it seemed a little thing
That he should read their meaning more than this:
'Here in the land of Lycia dwells thy bliss;

So much she loved thee that she wished thee gone,
That thou mightst live, though she were left alone;
Or else she had not left thee; failing not
To see how all the heart in thee waxed hot
To cast thine arms about her and to press
Her heart to thine and heal its loneliness.'
  Pity grew in him as he thought thereof,
And with its sweet content fed burning love,
Till all his life was swallowed by its flame,
And dead and past away were fear and shame,
Nor might he think that he could ever die.

  But now at last he with a passionate sigh
Turned from the place where he had seen her feet,
And murmured as he went, "O sweet, O sweet,
O sweet the fair morn that thou breathest in,
When thou, awakening lone, dost first begin
For one more day the dull blind world to bless
With sight of thine unmeasured loveliness."

  So speaking, through a low door did he gain
A little garden; the fair morn did wane,
The day grew to its hottest, the warm air
Was little stirred, the o'er-sweet lily there
With unbowed stem let fall upon the ground
Its fainting leaves; full was the air of sound
Of restless bees; from high elms far away
Came the doves' moan about the lost spring day,
And Venus' sparrows twittered in the eaves

Above his head. There 'twixt the languid leaves
And o'er-blown blossoms he awhile did go,
Nursing his love till faint he 'gan to grow
For very longing, and love, bloomed an hour,
Began to show the thorn about the flower,
Yet sweet and sweet it was, until the thought
Of that departing to his mind was brought,
And though he laughed aloud with scorn of it,
Yet images of pain and death would flit
Across his love, until at last anew
He 'gan to think that deeds there were to do
In his old way, if there he still would bide.
Deeds must have birth from hope; grief must he hide,
And into hard resolve his longing chill,
If he would be god-loved and conquering still:
So back he turned into the house, in mind,
Whatso might hap, the King once more to find,
And crave for leave to serve him; for he deemed,
Whate'er the King had warned or his love dreamed,
That he and youth 'gainst death were fellows twain
For years yet, whoso in the end should gain.

Deep buried in his thoughts he went, but when
He drew anigh the hall a crowd of men
Were round about it; armed they were, indeed,
But rent and battered was their warlike weed,
And some lacked wounding weapons; some men leant
Weakly 'gainst pillars; some were so much spent
They wept for weariness and pain; no few

Bore bandages the red blood struggled through;
E'en such they seemed, the hero thought, as folk
That erst before his Argive spears had broke,
And at his feet their vain arms down had cast:
So, wondering thereat, through these folk he passed
Into the hall, where on the ivory throne
Jobates sat, with flushed face, gazing down
Upon the shrinking captains; therewithal
E'en as he entered did the King's eyes fall
Upon him, and the King somewhat did start
At first, but then, as minding not the part
That he had played that morn, a gracious smile
Came o'er his face; then spake he in a while:
"Look upon these, O wise Bellerophon,
And ask of them what glory they have won—
Or ask them not, but listen unto me:
Over the mountain-passes that men see
Herefrom, a town there is, and therein dwell
Folk baser and more vile than men can tell;
A godless folk, without a law or priest;
A thankless folk, who at high-tide and feast
Remember not the Gods; no image there
Makes glad men's eyes, no painted story fair
Tells of past days; alone, unhelped they live,
And nought but curses unto any give:
A rude folk, nothing worth, without a head
To lead them forth,—and this morn had I said
A feeble folk and bondsmen of mine own.
But now behold from this same borel town

Are these men empty-handed now come back,
And midst these Solymi is little lack
This morn of well-wrought swords and silk attire
And gold that seven times o'er has felt the fire.
"Lo now, thou spak'st of wandering forth again—
Rather be thou my man, and 'gainst these men
Lead thou mine army; nay, nor think to win
But little praise if thou dost well herein,
For these by yesterday are grown so great
That if thou winnest them, midst this red heat
Of victory, a great deed shalt thou do,
And great will thy reward be; wilt thou go?
Methought thou hadst a mind to serve me here."

So, as Bellerophon drew more anear,
He thought within his heart, "Ah, then, I know
From all these things why he would have me go;
Yet since indeed I may not quite depart
From Lycia now, because my new-smitten heart
Is bound with bonds of love unto the land,
Safer am I in armour, sword in hand,
Than midst these silken hangings and fair things,
That well I wot hide many poison-stings:
The Gods are great, nor midst of men am I
Of such as, once being threatened, quickly die."

Then he spake out: "O King, wilt thou then pray
To all the Gods to give me a good day?
For when I was a youth and dwelt at home

Men deemed I knew somewhat of things to come,
And now methinks more dangers I foresee
Than any that have yet been forged for me."

The King frowned at that word, and flushed blood-red,
As if against his will; but quickly said,
In a mild voice: "Be of good cheer, O son;
For if the Gods help not Bellerophon
They will not have to say, that in this land
I prayed their good-will for thee with close hand.
No god there is that hath an altar here
That shall not smoke with something he holds de r
While thou art absent from us—but these men,
Worn as they are, are fain to try again,
As swiftly as may be, what from the Fates
In bloody fields the Lycian name awaits;
Mine armoury is not empty, yet there are
Unwounded men to furnish forth the war—
Yea, and mine household-folk shall go with thee,
And none but women in mine house shall be,
Until the Lycian shield once more is clean
Through thee, as though no stain had ever been.
Canst thou be ready by the second day
Unto the Solymi to take thy way?"

"So be it," said the wise Corinthian;
"And here, O King, I make myself thy man—
May the Gods make us faithful; but if worse

Must happen, on his head fall all the curse
Who does the wrong!—Now for thy part see thou
That we who go have everything enow;
Nor think to hear too soon of victory,
For though a spliced staff e'en as strong may be
As one ne'er broken, lean thou not thereon
Till o'er the narrow way thy feet have won
And thou may'st try it on the level grass.
Now give me leave, for I am fain to pass
Thy men in order by me, and to find
How best thy wounded honour I may bind."

When first the hero's hand the King's hand took,
But ill belike Jobates that did brook,
And well-nigh drew it back; yet still it lay
And moved not, and the King made haste to say:

"May the Gods bless us both, as I bless thee,
Who at this tide givest good help to me!
Depart, brave man; and, doing but thy best,
Howe'er fate goes, by me shalt thou be blest."

Then went Bellerophon, and laboured sore
To give the Lycian folk good heart once more,
Till day passed into night, and in fair dream
And hopeful waking, happy love did gleam,
E'en like the young sun, on the hero's head.
But when the next bright day was well-nigh dead,

Within the brazen porch Bellerophon
Stood thinking o'er all things that had been done.
Alone he was, and yearning for his love,
And longing for some deed the truth to prove
Of what seemed dreamlike now, midst all the stir
Of men and clash of arms; and wearier
He felt than need was, as the evening breeze
Raised up his hair. But while sweet images
His heart made now of what he once had seen,
There in the dusk, across the garden green,
A white thing fluttered; nor was steadier
His heart within him, as he thought of her,
And that perchance she came; and soon anigh
A woman drew, but stopping presently
Over against him, he could see her now
To be a handmaid, and, with knitted brow,
Was going thence, but through the dusk she cried:
"O fair my lord Bellerophon, abide
And hearken—here my lady sendeth me,
And saith these words withal:

Philonoë,
Born of the Lycian King, doth give thee this
Fair blade, and prayeth for thee health and bliss;
Saying, moreover; as for this same sword,
Draw it not forth before base man or lord,
But be alone when first it leaves the sheath;
Yet since upon it lieth life and death,
Surely thou wilt not long delay to see
The face of that bright friend I give to thee."

He felt the cold hilt meet his outstretched hand,
And she was gone, nor longer did he stand
Than but to look if any stood thereby,
Then gat him gone therefrom, and presently
Was lone within his chamber; there awhile
He stood regarding with a lovesome smile
The well-wrought sword, and fairly was it dight
With gold and gems; then by the taper's light
He drew it from the sheath, and, sooth to tell,
E'en that he hoped for therewithal befel,
Because a letter lay 'twixt blade and sheath,
Which straight he opened, and nigh held his breath
For very eagerness, the while he read:

Short is the time, and yet enow. it said,
Night-fall it will be when thou readest this.
If thou wouldst live yet, for the weal and bliss
Of many, gird this sword to thee, and go
Down to the quay, and there walk to and fro,
Until a sea-farer thou meetest there,
With two behind him who shall torches bear;
He shall behold the sword, and say to thee,
'Is it drawn forth?' and say 'Yea, verily,
And the wound healed.' Then shall he bring thee straight
Unto his keel, which with loose sails doth wait
Thy coming, and shall give thee gold good store,
Nor bide the morn to leave the Lycian shore.—
Farewell; I would have seen thee, but I feared—
—I feared two things; first, that we might be heard

By green trees and by walls, and thus should I
Have brought the death on thee I bid thee fly;
The first—but for the second, since I speak
Now for the last time—Love has made me weak;
I feared my heart made base by sudden bliss—
I feared—wilt thou be wroth who readest this?—
Mine eyes I saw in thine that other tide;
I thought perchance that here thou mightst abide,
Constrained by Love.
Now if I have said ill,
Shall not my soul of sorrow have its fill?
I sin, but bitter death shall pay therefor.

He read the piteous letter o'er and o'er,
Till fell the tears thereon like sudden rain,
For he was young, and might not love again
With so much pleasure, such sweet bitterness,
Such hope amid that new-born sharp distress
Of longing; half-content to love and yearn,
Until perchance the fickle wheel might turn.

The well-kissed sword within his belt he set,
But ye may well deem was more minded yet
To bide his fortune in the Lycian land,
What fear soe'er before his path might stand;
And great his soul grew, thinking of the tide
When every hindrance should be thrust aside,
And love should greet him; calm, as though the death,
He knew so nigh him, on some distant heath
Were sitting, flame-bound, waiting for the word

Himself should give; with hand upon his sword,
Unto the hall he took his way: therein
Was growing great and greater joyful din,
For there they drank unto the coming day;
And as through all that crowd he made his way,
The shouts rose higher round him, and his name
Beat hard about the stony ears of Fame.

So then beside the Lycian King he sat
A little while, and spake of this and that,
E'en as a man grown mighty; and at last
Some few words o'er that feasting folk he cast,
Proud, mingling sharp rebuke with confidence,
And bade them feast no more, but going thence
Make ready straight to live or die like men.
And therewithal did he depart again
Amidst them, and for half the night he went
Hither and thither, on such things intent
As fit the snatcher-forth of victory;
And then, much wondering how such things could be,
That aught but love could move a man at all,
Into a dreamless slumber did he fall,
Wherefrom the trumpet roused him in the morn,
Almost before the summer sun was born;
And midst the new-born longings of his heart,
From that fair place now must he needs depart
Unguarded and unholpen to his fate.

Nought happed to him 'twixt palace-court and gate

Of the fair city; thronged it was e'en then
With anxious, weeping women and pale men,
But unto him all faces empty were
But one, that nowise might he now see there:
Or ere he passed the great gate back he gazed
To where the palace its huge pile upraised
Unto the fresh and windy morning sky,
As seeking if he might e'en now espy
That which he durst not raise his eyes unto
When 'neath its walls he went a while ago.

So through the gate the last man strode, and they
Who in the city seemed so great a stay
Unto that people, as the country-side
About their moving ranks spread bleak and wide,
Showed like a handful, and the town no less
Seemed given up to utter helplessness.

SEVEN days of fear wore by; Philonoë
Must vex her heart with all that yet might be,
And oft would curse herself that she it was
Through whom such death as his should come to pass,
And weep to think of all her life made lone.
But on the eighth day, at the stroke of noon,
A little band of stained and battered men

Passed through the gate into the town again,
And left glad hearts as well as anxious ones
Behind them, as they clattered o'er the stones
Unto the palace: there the King they found
Set on his throne, with ancient lords around,
And cried to him, "O King, rejoice! at last
Raised is thy banner, that ill men had cast
Unto the ground; as safely mayst thou lie
Within the city of the Solymi
As in this house thou buildedst for thy bliss,
For all things there are thine now, e'en as this."

Then the King rose, and filled a cup with wine,
And said, "All praise be unto things divine!
Yet ere I pour, how goes it with our folk?
Did many die before they laid the yoke
On these proud necks? when will they come again?"

"O King," they said, "though they fell not in vain,
Yet many fell; but now upon the way
Our fellows are: I think on the third day
They will be here, and needs must they be slow,
Because they have with them a goodly show;
Wains full of spoil, arms, and most fair attire,
Wrought gold that seven times o'er has felt the fire;
And men and women of thy stubborn foes
E'en as thou wilt their lives to keep or lose."

"What sayst thou next about Bellerophon,"

The King said, "that this day for me hath won?
Is he alive yet?"
Then the man waxed pale,
And said, "He liveth, and of small avail
Man's weapons are against him; on the wall
He stood alone, for backward did we fall
Before the fury of the Solymi,
Because we deemed ourselves brought there to die,
And might not bear it: then it was as though
A clear bright light about his head did glow
Amidst the darts and clamour, and he turned
A face to us that with such glory burned
That those behind us drave us back again,
And cried aloud to die there in the pain
Rather than leave him, and with such a wave
Of desperate war swept up, they scarce could save
Their inmost citadel from us that tide,
Who at the first with mocks had bidden us bide
A little longer in a freeman's land,
Until their slaves had got their whips in hand
To drive us thence."
Now as he spake, at first
The King like one, who heareth of the worst,
And must not heed it, hearkened, but when he
Had heard his servant's tale out, suddenly
The wine he poured, and cried, "Jove, take thou this
In token of the greatness of our bliss,
In earnest of the gifts that thou shalt have,
Who thus our name, our noble friends didst save."

So spake he, looking downward, and his heart
In what his lips said, had perchance, some part,
However, driven on by long-sworn oath,
He dealt in things that sore he needs must loathe.
And he who erst had told him of the thing
Seemed fain to linger, as if yet the King
Had something more to say; but no fresh word
He had for him, but with great man and lord
Made merry, praising wind and wave
That brought Bellerophon their fame to save.

But joyous was the town to hear of this,
For in that place, midst all that men call bliss,
Cold fear was mingled; such a little band
They seemed, but clinging to a barbarous land
With strange things round about them; if the earth
Should open not to swallow up their mirth
And them together, they must deem it good;
Or if the kennels ran not with their blood,
While a poor remnant, driven forth with whips,
Must sit beneath the hatchways of strange ships,
Of such account as beasts. So there dwelt they,
Trembling amidst their wealth from day to day,
Afraid of god and man, and earth and sky.
Judge, therefore, if they thought not joyously
Of this one fallen amongst them, who could make
The rich man risk his life for honour's sake,
The trembling slave remember what he was,
The poor man hope for what might come to pass.

So when the day came when the gates were flung
Back on their hinges, and the people hung
About the pageant of their folk returned,
And many an eager face about him burned
With new and high desires they scarce could name,
He wondered how such glory on him came,
And why folk gazed upon him as a god,
And would have kissed the ground whereon he trod.
A little thing it seemed to him to fight
Against hard things, that he might see the light
A little longer and rejoice therein,
A little thing that he should strive to win
More time for love; and even therewithal
Into a dreamy musing did he fall
Amidst the shouts and glitter, and scarce knew
What things they were that he that day did do,
Only the time seemed long and long and long,
The noise and many men still seemed to wrong
The daintiness of his heart-piercing love,—
As through a world of shadows did he move.

Think then how fared his love Philonoë
Amid the din of that festivity!
For if while joy hung betwixt hope and fear
Life seemed a hateful thing to her and drear,
And all men hateful; if herself she cursed,
The hatefullest of all things and the worst;
If rest had grown a name for something gone
And not remembered; if herself alone

Seemed no more one, but made of many things
All wretched and at strife; if sudden stings
Of fresh pain made her start up from her place,
And set to some strange unknown goal her face,
And she must stifle wails with bitterest pain—
If all this was, ought she not now to gain
A little rest? now, when she heard the voice
Of triumph and the people's maddening noise
Round her returning love; still did she bear
Her grinding dread if with a wearier,
Yet with a calmer face, than now she bore
Desire so quickened by that fear past o'er.
She in her garden wandered through the day,
And heavy seemed the hours to pass away.
Her colour came and went, she trembled when
She heard some louder shout of joyous men;
She could not hear the things her maidens spake,
Nor aught could she seem gracious for their sake;
The sweetest snatch of some familiar song
She might not hearken; she abode not long
Within the shadow; weary of the sun
She grew full soon; the glassy brook did run
In vain across her feet; the ice-cold well
Quenched not her thirst; the half-blown roses' smell
Was not yet sweet enough: the sun sank low,
And then she murmured that the day must go
That should have been so happy; wearily
She laid her down that night, but nought slept she;
Yet in the morn the new sun seemed to bring

A joy to her, and some unnamed dear thing
Better than rest or peace; for in her heart
She knew that he in all her thoughts had part;
Yea, and she thought how dreamlike he would ride
Amidst his glory, and how ill abide
The clamour of the feast; yea, and would not
That night to him belike be dull and hot,
And that dawn hopeful?
'Neath the wall there was
A place where dewy was the daisied grass
E'en nigh the noon; a high tower great and round
Cast a long shadow o'er that spot of ground,
And blind it was of window or of door,
For, wrought by long-dead men of ancient lore,
No part it was of that stone panoply
That girt the town; so lilies grew thereby,
And woodbine, and the odorous virgin's-bower
Hung in great heaps about that undyked tower,
And lone and silent was the pleasance there.
Thither Love led Philonoë the fair,
And well she knew of him, and still her heart
At every little sound and sight would start,
And still her palms were tingling for the touch
Of other hands, and ever over-much
Her feet seemed light.
But when the bushes gleamed
With something more than the low sun that streamed
Athwart their blossoms, and a clear voice rung
Above the ousel's; then with terror stung,

She leaned her slim and perfect daintiness
'Gainst the grey tower, and even like distress
Her great joy seemed. Green clad he was that morn,
And to his side there hung a glittering horn,
A mighty unbent bow was in his hand,
And o'er his shoulders did the feathers stand
Of his long arrows; in his gleaming eyes
Such joy there was as he beheld the prize,
That in that shadow now he seemed to be
A piece of sunlight fallen down suddenly.

So face to yearning face they stood awhile,
And every word at first seemed poor and vile,
None better than another; nor durst they
Lips upon lips or palm to fingers lay,
More than if many people stood around,
With such strange fear and shame doth love abound.

At last she spake: "Thou comest, then, to say
How thou wilt now be wise and go away,
E'en as I bade; the prey has 'scaped the net;
Be wise, the fowler other wiles hath yet!"

"Yea," said he, "then thy word it was indeed
That needs must think about me in my need:
Strange, then, that now thou biddest me begone!
Belike thou know'st not of folk left alone,
And what life grows to them: yet art thou kind—
Thou deemest other friends I yet may find.

Alas, life goeth fast; not every day
Do we behold folk standing in the way
With outstretched hands to meet us."
"Ah," she said,
"How sweet thou art! and yet the dead are dead,
The absent are but dead a little while.
Then get thee gone from midst of wrong and guile,
And we shall meet once more in happier days,
When death lurks not amidst of rosy ways—
—Ah, wilt thou slay me, then?—I knew not erst
How poor a life I had, and how accurst,
Before I felt thy lips—what thing is this
That makes me faint amidst of new-born bliss?"

"Rest in mine arms, O well-beloved," said he;
"I faint not, neither shall death come on me
While thus thou art: nay, nay, I think if I,
Hacked with an hundred swords, should come to lie,
Yet without thee I should not then depart."

"O love, alas! the sorer is my heart
The more I love," she said, "we are alone;
Our loving life is not for any one
But for our own selves—ah, deem all I said
Before those lips of thine on mine were laid
As said again and yet again! Some hate
Is round thee here, some undeserved strange fate
Awaits thee here in Lycia—yea, full sure
The hungry swords here may we twain endure;

But what then?—Of the dead what hast thou heard
That maketh thee so rash and unafeared?
Can the dead love, or is there any space
In their long sleep when they lay face to face
Soft as we do now? can their pale lips plead
The pleas of love? or can their fixed eyes lead
Heart unto heart? or hast thou heard that they
Can wait from weary day to weary day,
And hope, as I will, while thou gatherest fame?
Can they have pleasure there e'en in a name,
A memory? is their pain a pleasure there,
Are tears sweet, and the longing sobs that wear
The hours away, where life and hope are gone?
"How can I any longer be alone?
Can I forget thee now? the while I live?
O my beloved, must I strive and strive,
And move thee not? How sweet thou art to me!
How dull the coming day that knows not thee!"

"Fear not," he said; "not yet my days are done!
When on the deadly wall I stood alone,
And back the traitors fell from me, I felt
As though within me such a life there dwelt
As scarce could end—Lo now, if I depart
I lack the safeguard of thy faithful heart,
And meet new dangers that thou know'st not of.
Yea, listen, nor rebuke me—This our love;
Hast thou not heard how love may grow a-cold
Before the lips that called thereon wax old?

Ah, listen! seas betwixt us, and great pain,
And death of days that shall not be again;
And yearning life within us, and desire
That changes hearts as fire will quench the fire.
These are the engines of the Gods, lest we,
Through constant love, Gods too should come to be.
A little pain, a little fond regret,
A little shame, and we are living yet,
While love that should out-live us lieth dead—

"Ah, my beloved, lift that glorious head
And look upon me! put away the thought
Of time and death, and let all things be nought
But this love of to-day! and think of me
As if for ever I should seem to thee
As I am now—I will not go away,
Nor sow my love, to reap some coming day
I know not what: be merry, we shall live
To see our love high o'er all danger thrive."

For now she wept, but, starting midst her tears,
She stopped and listened like a bird that hears
A danger on the wind: the round tower's shade
A lesser patch upon the daisies made,
And all about the place 'gan folk to stir:
She turned and girt her loosened gown to her,
And with one sob, and a long faithful look,
The gathering tears from out her eyes she shook,
Nor bade farewell, but swiftly gat her gone.

But he beneath the tower so left alone
Stooped down and kissed her foot-prints in the grass,
And then with swift steps through the place did pass,
Thinking high things; nor knew he till that hour
How sweet life was, or love its fruit and flower.

So passed the days, nor often might it be
That such sweet hours as this the twain might see;
And they must watch that folk might not surprise
Their hearts' love through the windows of their eyes
When midst of folk they met: but glorious days
Were for Bellerophon, and love and praise
From all folk, though the great end lingered yet
When he sweet life, or glorious death, should get.

NOW on a day was held of most and least
Unto Diana sacrifice and feast,
And on that tide the market empty was,
And through the haven might no dromund pass;
And then the wont was they should bear about
The goddess wrought in gold, with song and shout
And winding of great horns, amidst a band
Of bare-kneed maidens, bended bow in hand
And quiver at the back; and these should take,
As if by force, and for the city's sake,

Three damsels chosen by lot for that same end,
And bind their hands, and with them straightly wend
Unto the temple of Diana; there
The priest should lead them to the altar fair
And midst old songs should raise aloft the knife
As if to take from each her well-loved life;
Therewith the King, with a great company,
Through the great door would come and respite cry,
And offer ransom: a great golden horn,
A silver image of a flowering thorn,
Three white harts with their antlers gilt with gold,
A silk gown for a huntress, every fold
Thick wrought with gold and gems; then to and fro
An ancient song was sung, to bid men know
That of such things the goddess had no need;
Yet in the end the maidens all were freed,
The harts slain in their place, the dainty things
Hung o'er the altar from fair silver rings,
And then, midst semblance of festivity
And joyful songs, the solemn day went by

All this they told Bellerophon, and said
Moreover, that the white-foot well-girt Maid
These gifts must have, because a merry rout
Of feasters, knowing neither fear nor doubt,
With love and riot did her grove defile
In the old days; and therefore nought more vile
Than three fair maids' lives would she have at first,
And with that burden was the city cursed

For many years; "But in these latter days,
She to whom we to-morrow give great praise,
Will take these signs of our humility,
And let the folk in other wise go free."

So on the morn joyful the city was,
Nor did men look for aught to come to pass
More than in other years; but lo, a change!
For there betid great portents dire and strange.
For first, when in the car of cedar-wood,
Decked with green boughs, the golden goddess stood,
And the white oxen strained at yoke and trace,
In no wise might they move her from the place,
Though they had drawn well twenty times that weight.
So when the priests had come in all their state
To pray her, and no lighter she would grow,
They said she did it for that folk might know
She fain would have a shrine built o'er the way,
And that all rites should there be wrought that day.
So was it done, and now all things seemed well
A little space, and nought there was to tell
Until the King had brought the ransom due,
And the loosed bonds men from the maidens drew;
Then fell the third maid down before the King,
And cried from foaming mouth a shameful thing
Unmeet for maids; then from the frightened folk
That filled the street a clamour there outbroke,
And some cried out to slay the woman there,
And some to burn her wanton body fair,

And some to cast her forth into the sea
And purge the town of that iniquity.
But when the King had bidden lead her forth,
And try if she indeed were one of worth,
Or if her maidenhood were nought and vain,
The tossing street grew somewhat stilled again,
And o'er the sinking tumult called a priest:
"Abide, let see if she will take the beast
E'en as her wont is! but if so it be
That of our old crime she has memory
And threatens us with something strange and new,
Yet mid your fear do all in order due,
Nor make two faults of one, that ye may bear
A double punishment from year to year."

Then were the harts brought forth; the first one stood
Fearless as he were lonely in the wood,
While to his throat drew nigh the sharp-edged knife,
Nor did the second strive to keep his life;
But when the third and biggest drew anigh,
He tossed his gilded antlers angrily
And smote his foot against the marble floor,
While from his throat came forth a low hoarse roar;
And as the girl whose office was to smite
His drawn-back throat came forth confused and white,
And raised a wavering hand aloft, then he
His branching horns from the priests' hands shook free,
And as the affrighted girl fell back, turned round,

And gathered up his limbs for one last bound;
But even therewith a soldier from the band
That stood about the King raised up his hand,
And in the beast's heart thrust his well-steeled spear,
And as he smote, like one who knew no fear,
He cried aloud:
"O foolish Artemis,
Men's ways thou knowest not, putting from thee this,
The gift once offered! think no more of us
That we will pray with eyes all piteous
Before thee, or give gifts from trembling hands;
But get thee gone straightway to other lands,
Where folk will yet abide thee—for we know
How long a way it is for thee to go
From heaven to earth, how far thine arms will reach,
And no more now thy good-will do beseech!"

He stooped, and from the beast his weapon drew,
Then turned and passed his fear-struck fellows through,
Or ere the swords from out the scabbards came;
And so folk say, that no man knew his name
Or whence he was.
But from the concourse broke
In pale and murmuring knots the frightened folk;
And if the priests had heart yet for a word
Of comfort, neither so had they been heard;
But they slunk off too, more perchance afraid
Because they were the nigher to the Maid.

Now had the morn begun with cloud and sun;
But, little heeded there of any one
Mid that beginning of fear's agony,
Slowly the clouds were swallowing up the sky;
So ere the sun had wholly sunk in them,
Great drops fell slowly from a black cloud's hem
Amid that troubled folk, who felt as though
They from that place of terror needs must go,
Yet, going, scarce could feel their unnerved feet;
Then gleamed a lightning-flash adown the street,
The clattering thunder, made ten times more loud,
Because of dread, hushed all the murmuring crowd,
And brought a many trembling to their knees,
And some set off a-running toward the quays,
That they might go they knew not where or why;
But therewithal such rain fell from the sky,
As though some river of the upper world
Had burst his banks, the furious south-wind hurled
The folk's wet raiment upward as it tore
Along the ground, and the white rain-spray bore
Seaward along: yet so it came to pass
That no more terror from the sky there was;
The wind grew steady, but from roof of grey
Fast fell the rain upon the ruined day,
Till trembling still, and shivering with the cold,
Home went all folk, and soon the Maid of gold
Stood lonely in the rain-beat way and drear,
Amid drenched cloths and garlands, once made fair
To make the day more joyous.—You had thought

That now already had the Maiden brought
Upon the city all the dreaded ill,
So lifeless was it grown and lone and still.

But now to tell of Prince Bellerophon;
Upon that day so chanced it he had gone
Unto the hills, in chase the hours to spend
Until the tide of feasting should have end;
For since he was an alien in that place,
Beside the King he might not show his face
Unto the goddess; so that morn he stood
Upon a hill's top that from out a wood
Rose bare; thence looking east, he saw the sky
Grow black and blacker as the rain drew nigh,
And deemed it good to go, but, as he turned,
Afar a jagged streak of lightning burned,
Paling the sunshine that the dark woods lit,
And rocks about him; through his mind did flit
Something like fear thereat; and still he gazed
Out to the east, but not again there blazed
That fire from out the sky. Now was he come
To such a place, that thence fair field, and home
Of toiling men, and wood, and broad bright stream
Lay down below, and many a thing did gleam
Beneath the zenith's brightness, brighter yet
For horror of the far clouds' stormful threat,
And clear the air was with the coming rain—
So then as he would turn his head again,
Out in the far horizon like a spark

Some flame broke out against the storm-clouds dark,
And seemed to grow beneath his eyes; he stood,
And, gazing, saw across the day's dark mood
Another and another, nigh the first;
Then, as the distant thunder's threatening cursed
The country-side, and trembling beast and man,
The spark-like three flames into one thread ran,
That shot aloft amidst, yet further spread
At either end; and to himself he said:
"Ah, is it so? what tidings then draw near?
In warlike lands soon should I look to hear
Of armies marching on through war and wrack;
Good will it be in haste to get me back
Unto the foolish folk that trust in me."

Then did he mount and ride off hastily
Adown the slopes; but not so fast withal
But that upon him did the full storm fall
In no long time; and so through pelting rain
And howling wind he reached the gate again;
And so unto the palace went, to hear
From pale lips tales of all that day of fear;
And when about those bale-fires seen afar
He spake, and bade make ready for some war,
Folk listened coldly; for they thought to see
Some strange, portentous sign of misery
Set in the heavens upon the morrow morn,
And the old tale of war seemed well outworn.

Yet ere the night beyond its midst was worn,
Another tale unto their ears was borne
That cast into their hearts the ancient fear,
And the Gods' threatening easier seemed to bear
Than this that fell on them.
At dead of night
The grey clouds drew apart, the moon shone bright
Over a dripping world; and some folk slept
Wearied by fear, if some their tired limbs kept
Ready for flight; then clattering horse-hooves came
To the east gate, and one called out the name
Of him who had the guard; so said the man
That forth he went into the moonlight wan,
And saw nought but the tall black-shadowed trees
Waving their dripping boughs in the light breeze,
So went back scared. But in a while again
The galloping of horse did he hear plain,
But he and his sat fast and spake no word,
And scarce for fear might they hold spear or sword.
Nigher the sound came, till it reached the gate;
Then as the warders did abide their fate,
Thinking to see the gates burst open wide,
And death in some strange shape betwixt them ride,
The gates were smitten on with hasty blows,
And breathless cries of wild entreaty rose
Up through the night:
"Open, O open, ye
Who sit in peace, and let in misery!
Do ye not see the red sky at our backs?

And how the earth all quiet places lacks,
And shakes beneath the myriad hooves of steel?'
Open, ah open, as ye hope for weal!
For ships lie at your quays with sails all bent
And oars made ready—Open, we are spent!
Do ye not hear them? Open, Lycian men!"

With staring eyes still sat the warders when
That cry they heard, and knew not what should be;
And the great gates of oak, clenched mightily
With iron end-long and athwart, seemed fair
Unto their eyes; but as they cowered there
A clash of steel again their dull ears heard
That came from out the town, and more afeard
They grew, if it might be; then torches came
Into the place of guard, and mid their flame
A shining one in arms, with wrathful eyes
'Neath his bright helm, who cried:
"Why in this guise
Sit ye, O Lycians? Get each to his home!
For know that yesterday three keels did come
Laden with spindles and all women's gear,
And none need lack e'en such a garment here
As well befits him—lutes the Gods have sent,
And combs and golden pins, to that intent
That ye may all be merry—what say I?
Ye may be turned to women verily,
Because the Gods are wise, and thriftless deed
Mislikes them, and forsooth is little need

That thews and muscles go with suchlike hearts
As ye have, while all wise and manly parts
Are played by girls, weak-handed, soft, and white.

"Get to the tower-top, look ye through the night,
And ye shall see the cleared sky made all red
And murky 'neath the moon with signs of dread;
Come forth and meet them! What! the Gods ye fear,
And what they threaten? Life to you is dear?
Ah, fools, that think not how to all on earth
The very death is born along with birth;
That some men are but dying twenty years,
That some men on this sick-bed of all tears
Must lie for forty years, for eighty some,
Or ever they may reach their peaceful home!
Ah, give to birth the name of death, and wait
With brave hearts rather for the stroke of fate,
And hope, since ye gained death when ye were born,
That ye from death by dying may be torn—
—Unless ye deem that if this day ye live,
The next a deathless life to you will give.

"Come, then! these few behind me may ye see
Who think it worse to live on wretchedly
Than cast the die amidst of noble strife
For honoured death or fearless glorious life—
—Yea, yea! and is the foe upon us then?"

For even as he spake they heard again

The smiting on the door, and as the sword
Leapt from the exile's sheath with his last word,
Again the cry, made dim by the thick door,
Smote on their ears:

"Lycians, are ye no more
Within your guarded town? A voice we heard
As if of one who bade us not be feared—
He was a god belike, and no more men
Dwell in your town: ah, will ye open then
Do ye not hear that noise upon the wind,
And do ye think that ye fair days shall find
If our red blood shall stain your ancient gate?"

Then, as if these were maddened by some fate,
Down rained the blows upon the unyielding oak,
And the scared guards shrank back behind the folk
Bellerophon brought with him; therewith he
Sheathed his bright blade, and shot back mightily
The weight of iron bolt, and therewithal
Stepped aside swiftly; back the gates did fall
Upon their hinges, and a wretched throng
Stood, horse and foot, the glimmering spears among,
Cowering and breathless, and with eyes that turned
Over their shoulders, as though still they yearned
To see no more the quiet moonlit way
Beyond the open gates. But now, when they
Were ordered somewhat, and the gates again
Shut fast, Bellerophon cried out:

"O men,

Full fast ye fled, meseems! and who were these,
That made you tremble at the wet-leaved trees
And quivering acres of the bearded rye?"

Then spake an old man: "Fair sir, manfully
Thou speakest, and thy words are full of hope;
And yet with these no power thou hast to cope,
Who for each rye-head raise a spear aloft
Who know as much of fear, or pity soft,
As do the elm-trees; whom the Gods drive on
Until the world once happy they have won
And made it desert, peopled by the ghosts
Of those who happy died before their hosts;
Or else lived on in fear and misery
A little while before God let them die—
Devils are these; but what scorn shall we get
When thou hast heard that these are women!—yet
Keep thou thy scorn till thou art face to face
With these a minute ere the fearful chase."

Loud laughed Bellerophon, and said, "See ye,
O tremblers, what foreknowledge was in me,
When I said e'en now ye should change your parts
With women! Throw the gates wide, fearful hearts,
And let us out, that with a word or two
All that is needed herein we may do!"

The old man said, "Laugh, then, while yet your eyes
Are still unblasted with the miseries

These days have brought on us!—Lo, if I tell
Half of the dreadful things that there befell,
Ye will not listen,—if I tell the shape
Of these fell monsters, for whom hell doth gape
Still will ye say that but my fear it is,
That speaketh in me,—yea, but hearken this
For certainly such foes are on you now
As, bound together by a dreadful vow,
Will slay yourselves, and wives, and little ones,
And build them temples with the blanched bones,
Unto the nameless One who gives them force."

Then cried Bellerophon, in wrath: "To horse!
To horse, O Lycians! Ere the moon is down
The dawn shall come to light us; in the town
Bide thou, O captain, and guard gate and wall,
And leave us to what hap from Fate may fall!
We are enow—and for these cowards here,
Let them have yet another death to fear
Unless they rule their tongues. Tell thou the King
That, when I come again, full many a thing
These lips will have to tell him; and meanwhile,
Since often will the Gods make strong the vile,
And bring adown the great, let him have care
That this his city is left nowise bare
Of men, and food, and arms. More might I say,
But now methinks the night's face looks towards day
The moon sinks fast; so get we speedily
Unto that redness in the eastern sky;

That at the dawn with smoke shall dim the sun.'

A shout rose when his last clear word was done,
And at his back went rolling down the way
Mingled with clash of arms, for, sooth to say,
Hard had he laboured ere the dark night fell,
And thus had gathered men who loved him well,
Stout hearts to whom more fair it seemed to be
The face of death in stricken field to see
Than in that place to bide, till Artemis
Had utterly consumed all hope of bliss
With some unknown, unheard-of shape of fear.

So now his well-shod steed they brought him there;
Once more from out its sheath he drew his sword,
The gates swung backward at his shouted word,
And forth with eager eyes into the waves
Of darkness did he ride; the spears and glaives
Moved like a tossing winter grove behind
As on he led them, fame or death to find;
And grey night made the world seem over wide,
And over empty, in the darkling tide,
Betwixt the moonset and the dawn of day.

Then rose the sun; the fear that last night lay
Upon that people changed to certain fear
Well understood, of death that drew anear;
And now no more the timorous kept their eyes
Turned unto earth, lest in the sky should rise

The dreadful tokens of a changing world;
No more they thought to see strange things down-hurled
By Gods as unlike their vain images
As unto men are hell's flame-branched trees.
Last night for any war or pestilence,
Glad had they been to change that crushing sense
Of helplessness and lies; but now this morn,
Tormented by the rumour newly born,
The vague fear seemed the lightest; the Gods' hands
Less cruel than the deeds of those fell bands.—
Uprooted vines, fields trampled into mire,
The ring of spears around the stead afire,
Steel or the flame for choice; the torture hour
When time is gone, and the flesh hath no power
But to give agony on agony
Unto the soul that will not let it die,
So strong it is—the lone despair; the shame
Of a lost country and dishonoured name;
These last but little things to bear indeed,
When e'en the greatest helps not in our need,
And o'er the earth is risen furious hell.

Now, when this terror on the city fell,
At first went thronging to the clamorous quays
Rich men, with whatso things their palaces
Could give, that strong-backed slaves of theirs might
bear.
And to and fro the great lords wandered there,
Making hard bargains 'neath the shipmen's grin,

Who had good will a life of ease to win
With one last voyage; here and there indeed,
Among the heaps of silver and rich weed
Piled on the deck, the hard-hand mariners
Thrust rudely 'gainst the wondering infant heirs,
And delicate white slaves, and proud-eyed wives,
And grumbled as they wrought to save their lives.
And here and there a ship was moving out
With white sails spreading amid oath and shout,
While her sweeps smote the water heavily,
And on the prow stood, yearning for the sea
And other lands beyond, some trembling lord.
But presently thereof the King had word;
And when he knew that thus the matter went,
A trusty captain to the quays he sent,
And stout men armed, who lined the water-side.
So there perforce must every man abide,
For shut and guarded now was every gate.

But if, amid the fear of coming fate,
You ask how fared the sweet Philonoë,
With mind a shrinking tortured thing to see,
How shall you wonder! Tales of dread she heard
With scornful eyes, and chid with eager word
Her timorous women; and with bright flushed face
And glittering eyes, she went from place to place,
As though foreknowledge of the joy to come
Pierced through all grief. Of those that saw her, some
Would say, "Alas! this ill day makes her mad."

And some, " A message certes hath she had
From the other world, and is foredoomed to die."
But some would gaze upon her wrathfully,
While sitting with bent head on woe intent,
They watched her fluttering raiment as she went
Her daily ways as in fair time of peace.

So did the longest of all days decrease
Through hours of straining fear; full were the ways
With homeless country folk, with 'wildered gaze
Fixed on the eager townsmen questioning;
And carts with this or that poor homely thing,
And cumbered women worn and desolate,
Blocked up the road anigh the eastern gate.
Thronged with pale faces were the walls that day
Of folk so scared they could not go away,
But still must watch until the horror came,
Or watch at least that smoke above the flame
Till sundown lit the sky with dreadful light
And still the tales of horror and affright
Grew greater, and the cumbered city still
Weighed down with wealth could summon up no will
To fight or flee, or with closed lips to wait
Amidst her gold the evil day of fate.
Night came at last, a night of all unrest:
Upon the armed men now the people pressed
At gate and quay, until they needs must yield,
And many a bark o'erladen slowly reeled
Beneath the moonlight o'er the harbour green;

While as the breathing of the night wind keen
Sang down the creek, great sounds of fear it bore,
And redder was the sky than heretofore.

A fearful night, when some at last must think
That they of no more horror now might drink
Than they had drank; wherefore, with stress of fear
Made brave, some men must catch up shield and spear,
And leaderless go forth unto the flame
All eyes were turned to; but when daylight came,
With its grey light came naked death again,
And honourless did all things seem and vain
That man might do; the gates were left ajar,
And through the streets helpless in weed of war
The warders went: nought worth the King was made,
When by each man the truth of all was weighed,
And all seemed wanting: help there was in none.

Yet when 'mid these things nigh the day was done,
And the foe came not, once more hope was born
Within men's hearts too wearied and outworn
To gather fresh fear; then the walls seemed good,
The great gates more than iron and oaken wood,
And with returning hope there came back shame,
And they, bethinking them of their old name,
'Gan deem that spear to spear was no ill play,
What wrath of goddesses soever lay
Upon the city; and withal indeed,
There came fresh rumours to their honour's need,

And they bethought them of the godlike one
Who in their midst so great a deed had done,
And who erewhile rode forth so carelessly
Their very terror with his eyes to see.
  So at the sunset into ordered bands
Once more the men were gathered; women's hands
Bore stones up to the ramparts that no more
That crowd of pale and anxious faces bore,
But helms and spear-heads; and the King came forth
Amidst his lords, and now of greater worth
Than common folk he seemed once more to be.
And in some order, if still timorously
The Lycians waited through the night; the sky
Showed lesser tokens of the foe anigh,
So still hope grew.
                        At dawn of day the King
Bade folk unto Diana's image bring
Things precious and burnt-offerings; and the smoke
Curled o'er the bowed heads of the praying folk
There in the streets, and though nought came to pass
To tell that well appeased the goddess was,
And though they durst not strive to move her thence,
Yet did there fall on men a growing sense
That now the worst was over: and at noon,
Just as the King amid the trumpets' tune
Went to his house, a messenger pierced through
The wondering crowd, and toward Jobates drew,
Nor did him reverence, nor spake aught before
He gave unto the King the scroll he bore.

Then from his saddle heavily down-leapt,
Stiffened, as one who not for long has slept,
While the King read the scroll; then those anigh
Amid the expectant silence heard him cry,
"Praise to the Gods, who are not angry long!
Hearken, all ye, how they have quenched our wrong."

Good health and good-hap to the Lycian King
And all his folk, and every wished-for thing
Wisheth hereby Bellerophon, and saith:
From out the valley of the shade of death
Late am I come again to make you glad,
Because no evil journey have we had.
And now the land is cleansed of such a pest
As has not been before; be glad and rest,
And look to see us back in seven days' space,
For yet awhile must we abide to chase
The remnant of the women that ye feared.

Silence a moment followed that last word,
Then such a joyous shout, as good it is
That those can know not who still dwell in bliss;
Then turning here and there, with varied noise
The people through all places did rejoice,
Till pleasure failed for weariness; but still
Did old and young, and men and women fill
The temples with their praises; till, when earth
Had fallen into twilight mid their mirth,

With prayers and hymns they brought the great-eyed,
white,
Slow-going oxen through the gathering night,
And yoked them to Diana's car again;
Nor this time were they yoked thereto in vain,
Down went the horned heads, beam and axle-tree
Creaked as they drew, and folk cried out to see
The wheels go round; heart opened unto heart
With unhoped joy, and hate was set apart,
Envy and malice waited for some day
More common, as the goddess took her way
Amid the torch-lit, flower-strewn, joyous street,
Unto the house made ready for her feet.

But mid the noise of great festivity
That filled the night, slept on Philonoë,
Amid that sea of love past hope and fear,
And woke at sunrise no more sound to hear
Than singing of the birds in thick-leaved trees
Ere yet the sun might silence them; like these
Did she rejoice, nor strange to her it was
That all these things her love should bring to pass.
Rising, she said, "To-day thou workest this,
And unto many givest life and bliss;
To-morrow comes: therewith perchance for me
A time when thou my faithful heart mayst see."
Then she alone her fair attire did on,
And mid the sleepers went her way alone
Into the garden, and from flower to flower

Passed, making sweeter even that sweet hour;
And as by soft folds of her fluttering gown
Her body's fairness was both hid and shown,
E'en so in simpleness her soul indeed
Lay, not drawn back, but veiled beneath the weed
Of earthly beauty that the Gods had lent
Till they through years should work out their intent.

O'er the freed city passed the time away,
Until it drew unto the promised day
Of their return who all that peace had won.
And now the loved name of Bellerophon
Rang ever in the maiden's ears; and she,
As in the middle of a dream, did see
The city made all ready for that hour,
When in a fair-hung townward-looking bower,
Pale now, amid her maidens she was set,
New pain of longing for her heart to get.

Some dream there was of hurrying messengers
Bright with a glory that was nowise theirs,
And strains of music bearing back again
The heart to vague years long since lived in vain;
Then still a moving dream—of robes of gold,
Armour unsullied by the bloody mold
That bought this peace; a dream of noble maid
And longing youth in snowy robes arrayed;
Of tinkling harps and twinkling jewelled hands,
And gold-shod feet to meet the war-worn bands,

That few and weary, flower-crowned, made the dream
Less real amid the dainty people seem—
A wild dream of strange weapons heaped on wains,
And rude wrought raiment vile with rents and stains,
And dream-like figures by the axle-trees—
—Women or beasts? and in the hands of these
Trumpets of wood, and conch-shells, and withal
Clamour of blast and horrid rallying call,
And such a storm of strange discordant cries,
As stilled the townsfolk mid their braveries,
For therewith came the or[illegible] the fight.

A dreadful dream!—with blood-stained hair and white,
Clad in most strange habiliment of war,
Sat an old woman on a brazen car;
White stared her eyes from a brown puckered face
Upon the longed-for dainties of that place,
But wrath and fear no more in them were left,
For death seemed creeping on her · an axe-heft
Her chained hands held yet; and a monstrous crown,
Of heavy gold, 'twixt her thin feet and brown
Was laid as she had cast it off in fight,
When she was fain amidst her hurried flight
To hide all signs of her fell royalty.
An unreal dream—about her seemed to be,
Figures of women, clad in warlike guise,
In scales of brass, beasts' skins, and cloths of dyes,
Uncouth and coarse, made vile with earth and blood.

A dream of horror! nought that men deem good
Was seen in them, were they or young or old:
Great-limbed were some and mighty to behold,
With long black hair and beast-like brows, and low;
Bald-headed, old, and wizened did some go,
Yet all adorned with gold; this, in rich gown
Of some slain woman, went with eyes cast down;
That yelling walked, with armour scantly clad,
And at her belt a Lycian's head yet had
Hung by the flaxen hair; this old and bent
From bushy eyebrows grey, strange glances sent,
Grinning as from their limbs the people shrank;
But most the cup of pain and terror drank,
That they had given to drink so oft ere now
If any sign thereof their eyes might show,
And whatso mercy they of men might have,
No hope for them their gross hearts now did save.

A dreadful dream! Philonoë's slim hands
Shut from her eyes the sight of those strange bands;
Yet dreamlike must her heart behold them still,
Amid new thoughts of God, and good and ill,
And her eyes filled with tears. But what was this
That smote her yearning heart with sudden bliss,
Yet left it yearning? her fair head she raised,
And with wide eyes down on the street she gazed,
Yet cried not out; though all cry had been drowned
Amid those joyous shouts, as, laurel-crowned,
And sword in hand, and in his battered gear

On his black horse he came, and raised to her
Eyes that her heart knew. Nay, she moved not aught,
Nor reached her arms abroad, as he was brought
Beneath her place, too soon to go away;
And open still her hands before her lay
As down the street passed on the joyous cries,
Nor were there any tears in her soft eyes;
Only her lips moved softly, as she cast
One look upon the people going past,
Struggling and slow behind the last bright spears,
Whose steady points had so thrust back their fears

But amid silence 'neath the eyes of men,
Another time that day they met again;
And that was at the feast in the great hall,
For thither must the King's folk, one and all,
Women as men, give welcome unto him
Through whom they throve. Belike all things grew
dim
Before the hero's eyes but her alone,
Belike a strange light in the maid's eyes shone,
Made bright with pain; but yet hand met not hand,
Though each to each so close the twain must stand,
And though the hall was hushed to hear her say
Words that she heeded not of that fair day.
But when her clear and tender speech had end,
And mouths of men a mighty shout did send
Betwixt the pillars, still her lips did move,
As though they two were lone, with words of love.

Unheard, but felt by him.
So passed the day,
And other days and nights fell fast away;
But now when this great trouble had gone by,
And things again seemed no more now to lie
Within his mighty hands, she 'gan to fear
Her father's wiles again; the days grew drear,
The nights too long, nor might she see his face,
Nor might they speak in any lonely place;
And hope at whiles waxed dim, and whiles she saw
The fate her heart so dreaded on them draw,
While she must sit aside with folded hands,
While for her sake he shunned the peaceful lands

And all the while there must at last be borne
That darkest hour that brings about the morn.

NOW as the days passed, to his treasury
Would the King go, King Prœtus' gift to see,
And stand with knitted brows to gaze on it,
While many thoughts about his heart would flit.
And on a day he said, "Time yet there is
To slay the man who saved our life and bliss.
Once did I cast him unto death, and he
Must win nought thence but utter victory;
And when the Gods helped me with ruin and fear

Another time, yet that brought nowise near
The end this binds me to; yet once again
Shall it be tried before I call it vain,
And strive no more, but bear the punishment
That on oath-breakers and weak fools is sent."

Then gat he to the doom-hall of the town,
And midst his lords and wise men sat him down
And judged the people; if at whiles to him
The clamour of the jarring folk waxed dim
Amid the thoughts of his own life that rose
Within him and about his heart did close,
Yet none the less a great King there he seemed;
As of a god's his heart the people deemed.

Now in good peace and joy the summer wore,
Nor did folk mind how it was told of yore
That in the days to come great dangers three,
Within the bounds of Lycia should there be;
For fear of ill was grown an empty name.
Into fair autumn slipped the summer's flame
More fruitful than its wont, and barn and garth
Ran over with the good things of the earth.
Crowded the quays were, but no merchandise,
No bale of fair-wrought cloth or odorous spice,
Bore pestilence within it at that tide;
In peace and health the folk dwelt far and wide.

But when the way's dust easier now was seen

Upon the bordering grape-bunches, whose green
Was passing slow through red to heavy black,
And the ploughed land all standing crop did lack,
Though yet the share the fallow troubled not;
Now, when the nights were cool, and noons still hot,
And in the windless woods the acorn fell,
More tidings were there of that land to tell.

For on a day as in the doom-hall sat
Jobates, and gave word on this and that,
A clamour by the outer door he heard
Of new-come folk, mixed with the answering word
Of those his guards, who at the door did stand;
So when his say was said, he gave command
To bring in one of those about the door;
Then was a country carle brought forth before
The ivory seat, and scared he seemed to be;
And sodden was his face for misery,
As on the King he stared with open eyes.

"What wilt thou?" said Jobates. "What thing lies
Upon thee that my power can take away?
For in mine house the Gods are good to-day."

Twice did the man's lips open as to speak,
But no sound came; the third time did outbreak
A husky, trembling sound from them, but nought
To tell the wondering folk what thing he sought.

Then said the King, "The man is mazed with fear;
Go ye and bring him wine; we needs must hear
What new thing now has happed beneath the sun.
Take heart! for thou art safe!"

So was it done:
The man raised up the bowl with trembling hand,
And drank, and then a while he yet did stand
Silent amid the silence; then began
In a weak voice:

"A poor and toiling man
I am indeed; therefore a little thing,
My woe may seem to thee; yet note, O King,
That the world changes; unimagined ill
Is born therein, and shall grow greater still

"In early summer I was well enow
Among such men as still have need to sow
Before they reap, to reap before they eat,
Nor did I think too much of any threat
Time had for me; but therewith came the tide
When those fell women harried far and wide;
I saved myself, my wife, and little ones,
And with nought else lay on this city's stones
Until peace came; then went I to the west
Where dwelt my brother in good peace and rest,
And there the four of us must eat our bread
From hands that grudged not mayhap, with small dread
And plenteous toil. A vineyard hath he there,
Whose blossoming in March was full and fair,
And May's frost touched it not, and July's hail

Against its bunches green might not prevail;
Up a fair hill it stretched; exceeding good
Its sunny south-turned slopes are; a thin wood
Of oak-trees crowns the hill indeed, wherein
Do harbour beasts most fain a feast to win
At hands of us and Bacchus; but a wall
Well built of stones guardeth the garth from all
On three sides, and at bottom of the hill
A full stream runs, that dealeth with a mill,
My brother's too, whose floury duskiness
Our hungry souls with many a hope did bless;
Within the mill-head there the perch feed fat,
And on the other side are meadows flat,
And fruitful; shorn now, and the rooting swine
Beneath the hedge-row oak-trees grunt and whine,
And close within the long grass lies the quail,
While circling overhead the kite doth sail,
And long the partridge hath forgot the mowers.
A close of pot-herbs and of garland flowers
Goes up the hill-side from the green-banked stream,
And a house built of clay and oaken beam
Stands at its upper end, whose hillward side
Is midst the vines, that half its beams do hide.—
—Nay, King, I wander not, I mind me well
The tale from end to end I have to tell,
Have patience!

"Fair that house was yesterday,
When lusty youth and slim light-handed may
Were gathered from the hamlets thereabout;

From the stream-side came laughing scream and shout,
As up the bank the nets our maidens drew,
And o'er their bare feet washed with morning dew
Floundered the cold fish; for grape-gathering tide
It was that morn, and folk from far and wide
Came to our help, and we must feast them there,
And give them all we had of good and fair.
"King, do I babble? thou for all thy crown
And robes of gold hadst gladly sat thee down
At the long table 'neath the apple-trees—
And now—go find the bones of one of these,
And be called wise henceforth!
"The last guest came,
The last shout died away that hailed his name,
The ring of men about the homestead door
Began to move; the damsels hung no more
Over the fish-tubs, but their arms shook dry
And shod their feet, and came up daintily
To mingle with the girls new-come thereto,
And take their baskets and the edge-tools due;
The good wife from the white well-scalded press
Brushed off the last wasp; while her mate did bless
The Gods, and Bacchus chiefly, as he poured
Upon the threshold ancient wine long stored
Under the earth; and then broke forth the song
As to the vineyard gate we moved along.
"Hearken, O King! call me not mad, or say
Some evil god-sent dream upon me lay;
Else could I tell thee thus how all things fell?—

Nay, speak not, or the end I may not tell.
"Yea, am I safe here? will he hear of it
And come to fetch me, even if I sit
Deep underground, deep underneath the sea,
In places thou hast built for misery
Of those that hate thee; yet for safeguard now
Of me perchance? O King, abide not thou
Until my tale is done, but bid them go
Strengthen thy strong gates—deem thy high walls low
While yet the sun they hide not!"
At that word
He turned and listened as a man who heard
A doubtful noise afar, but still the King
Sat quiet midst his fear of some great thing,
And spake not, lest he yet should lose the tale.

Then said the man: "How much may now avail
Thy power and walls I know not, for I thought
Upon the wind a certain noise was brought—
But now I hear it not, and I will speak—
What said I?—From all mouths there did outbreak
A plaintive song made in the olden time,
Long sung by men of the wine-bearing clime;
Not long it was, and ere the end was o'er
In midst the laden vine-rows did we pour,
And fell to work as glad as if we played;
And merrier grew the laugh of man and maid
As the thin baskets filled upon that morn;

And how should fear or thought of death be born
In such a concourse! Now mid all this, I
Unto the upper end had drawn anigh,
And somewhat lonely was I, when I heard
A noise that seemed the cry of such a bird
As is a corncrake; well, I listened not,
But worked away whereas was set my lot,
Midst many thoughts; yet louder 'gan to grow
That noise, and not so like a bird seemed now
As a great spring of steel loosed suddenly.
I put my basket down, and turned to see
The other folk, nor did they heed the noise,
And still amid their labour did rejoice;
But louder still it seemed, as there I stood
Trembling a while, then turned, and saw the wood
Like and unlike what I had known it erst;
And as I gazed the whole sky grew accurst
As with a greenish vapour, and I turned
Wild eyes adown the hill to see what burned;
There did my fellows 'twixt the vine-rows pass
Still singing; smitten then I thought I was
By sudden sickness or strange coming death;
But even therewith in drawing of a breath
A dreadful shriek rose from them, and mine eyes
Saw such a shape above the wall arise
As drave all manhood from me, and I fell
Grovelling adown; nor have I words to tell
What thing it was I saw; only I know

That from my feet the firm earth seemed to go,
And like a dream showed that fair country-side,
And, grown a mockery, needs must still abide,
An unchanged picture 'gainst the life of fear
So fallen upon me. The sweet autumn air
With a faint sickening vapour now was filled,
And all sounds else but that sound were clean stilled,
Yea, even the voice of folk by death afeard,
That in the void that horror might be heard,
And nought be heeded else.
"Hearken, O King,
The while I try to tell thee of the thing
What like it was—well, lionlike, say I?
Yea, as to one who sees the teeth draw nigh
His own neck—like a horror of the wood,
Goatlike, as unto him who in drear mood
Sees monsters of the night bemock his love,
And cannot hide his eyes or turn to move—
Or serpent-like, e'en as to such an one
A serpent is, who floating all alone
In some untroubled sea all void and dim
Beholds the hoary-headed sea-worm swim,
Circling about him, ere he rise to strike—
Nay, rather, say the world hath not its like—
A changer of man's life, a swallowing dread,
A curse made manifest in devil-head.

"Long lay I there, meseems; no thought I had
Either of death, or yet of being made glad

In time to come, for all had turned to pain,
Nor might I think of aught to call a gain—
Right wondrous is the life of man, O King!
So strong to bear so many a fearful thing,
So weak of will—See now, I live, who lay
How long I know not, on that wretched day,
As helpless as a dead man, but for this,
That pain still grew with memory of what bliss
Passed life had been to me; until, God wot,
So was I helped, that memory now was not,
And all was blank.
"Well, once more did I 'wake,
Empty at first, till stirred the sickening ache
Of that great fear; then softly did I rise,
And gazed about the garth with half-dead eyes,
A heart whence everything but fear was gone."

He stopped a while and hung his head adown,
As if remembering somewhat; then he drew
Nigher the King, and said: "This thing is true.
Though thou believe it not—that I was glad
Within the hour that yet my life I had,
Though this I saw—the garth made waste and bare,
Burnt as with fire, and for the homestead fair
The last flames dying o'er an ash-heap grey—
Gone was the mill, the freed stream took its way
In unchecked shallows o'er a sandy bed.
"I knew not if my kin were slain or fled,
Yet was I glad awhile that nought was there

But me alone, till sense and dread 'gan stir
Within my heart; then slowly I began
To move about, and saw no child of man—
Unless maybe those ash-heaps here and there
I durst not go anigh, my fellows were.
Could I but flee away now! down I gat
Unto the stream, yet on the bank I sat
A long while yet, bewildered; till at last
I gathered heart, and through the stream ran fast,
And on and on, and cried, '*Are all men gone?*
Is there none left on earth but I alone,
And have I nought to tell my tale unto?'

"So did I run, until at last I knew
That among men I was, who, full of fear,
Were striving somewhat of the words to hear
My heart spake, but my lips would utter not;
And food and drink from them perchance I got,
Perchance at last I told the story there;
I know not, but I know I felt the air
And seemed to move—they must have brought me
then
To thee, O King—but these are not the men,
These round about—there is no more to say.
Meseems I cannot sleep or go away,
Yet am I weary."
Slowly came from him
The last words, and his eyes, all glazed and dim,
Began to close; he tottered, and at last

Sank on the ground, and into deep sleep passed,
Nor might men rouse him; so they bore him thence,
Till death should reach him or returning sense.

So next of those who brought him thereunto
Was question made what of those things they knew;
Who answered e'en as for their fear they might;
For some had seen a fire the late-past night,
And some the morn before a yellow smoke;
And one had heard the cries of burning folk;
And one had seen a man stark naked fly
Adown the stream-side, and as he went by
Saw that he bled, and thought that on his flesh
Were dreadful marks, that were as done afresh
By branding irons. One, too, said he saw
A dreadful serpent by the moonlight draw
His dry folds o'er the summer-parched way
Unto a pool that 'neath the hill-side lay.
And men there were who said that they had heard
The sound of lions roaring, and, afeard,
Had watched all-armed, with barred doors, through the night.
Then as men's faces paled with sore affright,
Unto the doom-hall came more folk, and more,
And tales of such-like things they still told o'er,
Of fresh deaths and of burnings, and still nought
They had to tell of what this fear had wrought.

Now ye shall know that Prince Bellerophon

In a swift ship had sailed a while agone
'Gainst a Tyrrhenian water-thief, who then
Wrought great scathe on the peaceful merchantmen
That sought those waters, so the King sent forth
Another captain that he held of worth,
And eighty men with him in company,
Well armed, the truth of all these things to see

At sunset from the town did they depart,
And none among them seemed to lack good heart,
And wise they were in war, but ere the sun
Through all the hours of the next day had run,
One ancient brave man only of the band
Came back again, no weapon in his hand,
No shield upon his neck—but carrying now
His son's dead body on his saddle bow,
A lad of eighteen winters, fair and strong,
But when men asked what thing had wrought that wrong,
Nought might he answer, but with bowed down head
Still sat beside the armed body dead,
As one who had no memory, but when folk
Searched the youth's body for the deadly stroke,
No wound at all might they find anywhere,
So still the old man sat with hopeless stare,
And though he seemed right hale and sound of limb,
And ate and drank what things were brought to him,
Yet speechless did he live for three more days,
Then to the silent land he went his ways.

Now a great terror on the city fell,
Even as that whereof we had to tell
In the past summer; day by day there came
Folk fleeing to the gates, who thought no shame
To tell how dreams had scared them, or some sign
In earth, or sky, or milk, or bread, or wine,
Or in some beast late given unto a god;
And on the beaten ways once more there trod
The feet of homeless folk; the country-side
Grew waste and bare of men-folk far and wide;
And whatso armèd men the King did send,
But little space upon their way did wend
Ere they turned back in terror; nigher drew
The belt of desolation, yet none knew
What thing of ill it was that wrought this woe,
More than the man who first the tale did show.

Meanwhile men's eyes unto the sea were turned
Watching, until the Sea-hawk's image burned
Upon the prow Bellerophon that bore,
And his folk cast the hawser to the shore,
And long it seemed to them did he delay.
Yet since all things have end, upon a day
The Sea-hawk's great sweeps beat the water green,
And her long pennon down the wind was seen,
As nigh the noontide toward the quays she passed,
With sound of horns and singing; on the mast
Hung the sea-robbers' fair shields, lip to lip,
And high above the clamour of the ship,

Out from the topmast, a great pennoned spear
The terror of the seas aloft did bear,
The head of him who made the chapmen quake.

New hope did that triumphant music wake
Within men's hearts, as now with joyous shout
The bay-crowned shipmen shot the gangway out
Unto the shore, and once more as a god
The wise Bellerophon among them trod,
As to the Father's house he took his way,
The tenth of all the spoil therein to lay.
But when he came into the greatest square
Where was the temple, a great throng was there,
And on the high steps of the doom-hall's door,
A clear-voiced, gold-clad herald stood, before
A row of spears; and now he cried aloud,
Over the raised heads of the listening crowd:

"Hearken. O Lycians! King Jobates saith;
Upon us lies the shadow of a death
I may not deal with; old now am I grown,
And at the best am but one man alone;
But since such men there are, as yet may hope
With this vague unseen death of man to cope,
He whereby such a happy end is wrought
Shall nowise labour utterly for nought
As at my hands; lest to the gods we seem
To hold too fast to wealth, lest all men deem
We are base-born and vile: so know hereby,

That to the man who ends this woe will I
Give my fair daughter named Philonoe,
And this land's rule and wealth to share with me.
And if it be so that he may not take
The maiden, let him give her for my sake
To whom he will; or if that may not be
A noble ransom shall he have of me
And be content.—May the gods save us yet,
And in fair peace these fears may we forget!"

He ended, and the folk about the place,
Seeing the shipmen come, on these did gaze,
And in their eyes were mingled hope and doubt,
But at the last the shadow of a shout
They raised for Prince Bellerophon; and he
Stood at the door one moment silently,
And wondered; for he knew nought of the things
That there had fallen while the robber-kings
He chased o'er ridge and furrow of the sea;
Because folk deemed ill-omened it would be
To tell thereof ere all things due were paid
Unto the Father, and the fair tenth laid
Before his altar. Yet he could not fail
To see that in some wise the folk must ail;
Such haggard eyes, such feverish faces were
About him; yea, the clamour and the cheer
That greeted him were eager with the pain
Of men who needs must hope yet once again
Before they fall into the jaws of death.

So as the herald spake, he held his breath,
His heart beat fast, and in his eyes there burned
The light of coming triumph, as he turned
Unto a street that led from out the place,
And up the steep way saw the changeless grace
Of the King's palace, and the sun thereon,
That calmly o'er its walls of marble shone,
For all the feverish fears of men who die:
One moment thus he stood, and smiled, then high
Lifted his sword, and led the spear-wood through
The temple-door and toward the altar drew.

BUT when all rites to Jove were duly done,
Unto the King went up Bellerophon,
To tell him of his fare upon the sea;
So in the chamber named of porphyry
He found Jobates pacing to and fro,
As on the day when first he bade him go
And win the Solymi.
"O King," he said,
"All hail to thee! the water-thief is dead,
His keel makes sport for children of the sea."

"And I, Bellerophon, have news for thee,
And see thou to it! The gods love so well

The fair wide world, that fear and death and hell
In this small land will they shut up for aye.
And thou—when thou hadst luck to get away,
Why must thou needs come back here, to abide
In very hell? I say the world is wide,
And thou art young; far better had it been,
When o'er the sea-thief's bulwarks first were seen
Men's wrathful eyes, the war-shout to have stayed;
Then might ye twain, strong in each other's aid,
Have won some fair town and good peace therein:
For here with us stout heart but death shall win."

Now on a table nigh the King's right hand
Bellerophon beheld a casket stand
That well he knew; thereby a letter lay,
Whose face he had not seen before that day,
And as he noted it a half-smile came
Across his face, for a look like to shame
Was in the King's eyes as they met his own.

Cheerly he spake: "O King, I have been thrown
Into thine hands, and with this city fair
Both weal and woe have I good will to share.
Young am I certes, yet have ever heard
That whether men live careless or afeard
Death reaches them; of endless heaven and hell
Strange stories oft have I heard people tell;
Yet knew I no man yet that knows the road
Which leadeth either to the blest abode

Or to the land of pain. Not overmuch
I fear or hope the gates of these to touch
Unless we twain be such men verily
As on the earth make heaven and hell to be;
And if these countries are upon the earth,
Then death shall end the land of heaven and mirth,
And death shall end the land of hell and pain.
Yea, and say all these tales be not in vain,
Within mine hand do I hold hope—within
This gold-wrought scabbard—such a life to win
As will not let hope fall off utterly,
Until such time is come that I must die
And no more need it. But the time goes fast,
Into mine ears a tale the townsmen cast
With eager words, almost before my feet
The common earth without Jove's fane could meet;
I heard thy herald too say mighty things—
How sayest thou about the oaths of kings?"

The King's eyes glistened: "O Corinthian,"
He said, "if there be such a twice-cursed man
As rules the foolish folk and punisheth,
And yet must breathe out lies with every breath,
Let him be thrice cursed, let the Gods make nought
Of all his prayers when he in need is caught!"

"What sayest thou," then said Bellerophon,
"If a man sweareth first to such an one,
And then to such another, and the twain

Cannot be kept, but one still maketh vain
The other?"

Then the King cast down his eyes:
"What sayest thou, my son? What mysteries
Lie in these words of thine? Go forth and break
This chain of ours, and then return to take
Thy due reward—oft meseems so it is
That these our woes are forged to make thy bliss."

Then laughed Bellerophon aloud, and said,
"The Gods are kind to mortals, by my head!
But so much do they love me certainly
That more than once I shall not have to die;
And I myself do love myself so well
That each night still a pleasant tale shall tell
Of the bright morn to come to me. But thou,
Think of thy first vow and thy second vow!
For so it is that I may come again
Despite of all: and what wilt thou do then?
Ponder meanwhile if from ill deeds can come
Good hap to bless thee and thy kingly home!"

And even with that last word was he gone,
And the King, left bewildered and alone,
Sat down, and strove to think, and said at last:
"Good were it if the next three months were passed;
I should be merrier, nigher though I were
Unto that end of all that all men fear."

Then sent he for his captain of the guard,
And said to him, "Now must thou e'en keep ward
Closer than heretofore upon the gates,
Because we know not now what thing awaits
The city, and Bellerophon will go
The truth of all these wondrous things to know:
So let none pass unquestioned; nay, bring here
Whatever man bears tales of woe or fear
Into the city; fain would I know all —
Nay, speak, what thinkest thou is like to fall?"

"Belike," the man said, "he will come again,
And with my ancient master o'er us reign
E'en as I came in did he pass me by,
And nowise seemed he one about to die."

"Nay," said the King, "thou speak'st but of a man;
Shall he prevail o'er what made corpses wan
Of many a stout war-hardened company?"

"Methinks, O King, that such might even be,"
The captain said; "he is not of our blood;
He goes to meet the beast in other mood
Than has been seen among us, nor know I
Whether to name him mere man that shall die,
Or half a god; for death he feareth not,
Yet in his heart desire of life is hot;
Life he scorns not, yet will his laughter rise

At hearkening to our timorous miseries,
And all the self-wrought woes of restless men."

"Ah," said the King, "belike thou lov'st him then?"

"Nay, for I fear him, King," the captain said,
"And easier should I live if he were dead;
Besides, it seems to me our woes began
When down our streets first passed this godlike man,
And all our fears are puppets unto him;
That he may brighter show by our being dim,
The Gods have wrought them as it seems to me."

"What wouldst thou do then that the man might be
A glorious memory to the Lycian folk,
A god who from their shoulders raised a yoke
Dreadful to bear; then, as he came, so went,
When he had fully wrought out his intent?"

"Nay, King, what say'st thou? Hast thou then forgot
Whereto he goes this eve? Nay, hear'st thou not
His horse-hooves' ring e'en now upon the street?
Look out! look out! thine eyes his eyes shall meet,
And see the sun upon his armour bright!
Yet the gold sunset brings about the night,
And the red dawn is quenched in dull grey rain."

Then swiftly did the King a window gain,
And down below beheld Bellerophon,

And certes round about his head there shone
A glory from the west. Then the King cried:
"O great Corinthian, happy mayst thou ride,
And bring us back our peace!"
The hero turned,
And through his gold hair still the sunset burned,
But half his shaded face was grey. He stayed
His eager horse, and round his mouth there played
A strange smile as he gazed up at the King,
And his bright hauberk tinkled ring by ring.
But as the King shrank back before his gaze,
With his left hand his great sword did he raise
A little way, then back into the sheath
He dropped it clattering, and cried:
"Life or death,
But never death in life for me, O King!"
Therewith he turned once more; with sooty wing
The shrill swifts down the street before him swept,
And from a doorway a tired wanderer leapt
Up to his feet, with wondering look to gaze
Upon that golden hope of better days.

Then back the King turned; silent for awhile
He sat beneath his captain's curious smile,
Thinking o'er all the years gone by in vain.
At last he said:
"Yea, certes, I were fain
If I my life and honour so might save
That he not half alone, but all should have."

"Yea," said the captain, "good the game were then,
For thou shouldst be the least of outcast men;
So talk no more of honour; what say I,—
Thou shouldst be slain in short time certainly,
Who hast been nigh a god before to-day!
Be merry, for much lieth in the way
'Twixt him and life: and, to unsay the word
I said before, be not too much afeard
That he will come again. The Gods belike
Have no great will such things as us to strike,
But will grow weary of afflicting us;
Because with bowed heads, and eyes piteous,
We take their strokes. When thou sitt'st down to hear
A minstrel's tale, with nothing great or dear
Wouldst thou reward him, if he thought it well
Of wretched folk and mean a tale to tell;
But when the godlike man is midst the swords
He cannot 'scape; or when the bitter words,
That chide the Gods who made the world and life,
Fall from the wise man worsted in the strife;
Or when some fairest one whose fervent love
Seems strong the world from out its curse to move,
Sits with cold breast and empty hands before
The hollow dreams that play about death's door—
When these things pierce thine ears, how art thou
moved!
Though in such wise thou lov'st not nor art loved,
Though with weak heart thou lettest day wear day
As bough rubs bough; though on thy feeble way

Thou hast no eye to see what things are great,
What things are small, that by the hand of fate
Are laid before thee. Shall we marvel then,
If the Gods, like in other things to men,
(For so we deem them) think no scorn to sit
To see the play, and weep and laugh at it,
And will not have poor hearts and bodies vile
With unmelodious sorrow to beguile
The long long days of heaven—but these, in peace,
Trouble or joy, or waxing, or decrease,
Shall have no heed from them—ah, well am I
To be amongst them! never will I cry
Unto the Gods to set me high aloft,
For earth beneath my feet is sweet and soft,
And, falling, scarce I fall.
"Behold, O King,
Beasts weep not ever, and a short-lived thing
Their fear is, and their generations go
Untold-of past; and I who dwell alow,
Somewhat with them I feel, and deem nought ill
That my few days with more of joy may fill;
Therefore swift rede I take with all things here,
And short, if sharp, is all my woe and fear.
"Now happier were I if Bellerophon,
This god on earth, from out our land were gone,
And well I hope he will not soon return—
Who knows? but if for some cause thou dost yearn
For quiet life without him, such am I
As, risking great things for great things, would try

To deal with him, if back again he comes
To make a new world of our peaceful homes.
Yet, King, it might well be that I should ask
Some earthly joy to pay me for the task;
And if Bellerophon returns again
And lives, with thee he presently will reign,
And soon alone in thy place will he sit;
Yea, even, and if he hath no will for it.
His share I ask then, yet am not so bold
As yet to hope within mine arms to fold
Philonoë thy daughter, any more
Than her, who on the green Sicilian shore
Plucked flowers, and dreamed no whit of such a mate
As holds the keys of life, and death, and fate—
—Though that indeed I may ask, as in time,
The royal bed's air seem no outland clime
To me, whose sire, a rugged mountaineer,
Knew what the winter meant, and pinching cheer."

Into the twinkling crafty eyes of him
The King looked long, until his own waxed dim
For thinking, and unto himself he said:
"To such as fear is trouble ever dead,
How oft soe'er the troublous man we slay?"

At last he spake aloud: "Quick fails the day;
These things are ill to speak of in the night;
Now let me rest, but with to-morrow's light
Come thou to me, and take my word for all."

The mask of reverence he had erst let fall
The Captain brought again across his face,
And smiling left the lone King in his place
Who when all day had gone, sat hearkening how
Without, his gathering serving men spake low,
And through the door chinks saw the tapers gleam

But now while thus they talked, and yet the stream
Of golden sunsetting lit up the world,
Ere yet the swift her long dusk wings had furled
In the grey cranny, fair Philonoe went
Amid her maids with face to earth down bent
Across the palace yard, oppressed with thought
Of what those latter days to her had brought,
Daring, unlike a maid's sweet tranquil mind,
And hushed surprise, so strange a world to find
Within her and around her life once dear,
Despised yet clung to, fear and scorn of fear,
A pain she might not strive to cast away,
Lest in the heart of it all life's joy lay,
Joy now and ever. Toward the door she came
Of the great hall, the sunset burned like flame
Behind her back, and going ponderingly
She noted her grey shadow slim to see
Rise up and darken the bright marble wall,
Then slower on the grass her feet did fall
Till scarce she moved, then from within she heard
A voice well loved cry out some hurried word.
She raised her face, and in the door she seemed

To see a star new fallen, therefrom there gleamed
Such splendour, but although her dazzled eyes
Saw nought, her heart, fulfilled of glad surprise,
Knew that his face was nigh ere she beheld
The noble brow as wise as grief-taught eld,
As fair as a god's early unstained youth.

A little while they stood thus, with new ruth
Gathering in either's heart for the other's pain,
And fear of days yet to be passed in vain,
And wonder at the death they knew so nigh
And disbelief in parting, should they die,
And joy that still they stood together thus.
Then, in a voice that love made piteous
Through common words and few, she spake and said:

"What dost thou, Prince, with helmet on thine head
And sword girt to thee, this fair autumn eve?
Is it not yet a day too soon to leave
The place thou camest to this very noon?"

He said, "No Lycian man can have too soon
His armour on his back in this our need,
Yea, steel perchance shall come to be meet weed
For such as thou art, lady. Who knows whence
We next may hear tales of this pestilence?
Fair is this house: yet maybe, or today
The autumn evening wind has borne away
From its smooth chambers sound of woe and tears,

And shall do yet again. Death slayeth fears,
Now I go seek if Death too slayeth love."

A little toward him did one slim hand move,
Then fell again mid folds of her fair gown;
She spake:
"Farewell, a great man art thou grown;
Thou know'st not fear or lies; so fare thou forth:
If the Gods keep not what is most of worth
Here in the world, its memory bides behind;
And we perchance in other days may find
The end of hollow dreams we once have dreamed,
Waking from which such hopeless anguish seemed."

Pale was her face when these words were begun,
But she flushed red or ere the end was done
With more than sunset But he spake and said:
"Farewell, farewell, God grant thee hardihead,
And growing pleasure on from day to day!"

Then toward the open gate he took his way
Nor looked aback, nor yet long did she turn
Her eyes on him, though sore her heart did yearn
To have some little earthly bliss of love
Before the end.
But right and left did move
Her damsels as he passed them, e'en as trees
Move one by one when the light fickle breeze